GUARDIAN WEEKLY
December 24 1995

Football Premiership Liverpool 2 Manchester United 0

In the line of fire . . . Robbie Fowler curls a free kick around the United wall for Liverpool's first goal PHOTOGRAPH: MICHAEL STEELE

Safety-first Liverpool rout limp United

Ian Ross

IT MAY still be a little too soon to start talking about defining moments and watersheds but the destinies of championships are often shaped in circumstances such as these.

It was another fine weekend for Newcastle United. A somewhat fortunate victory over Everton at St James' Park on Saturday was followed on Sunday by the defeat — the rout — of their closest, perhaps only, rivals for the Premiership title.

Manchester United, however, could argue that Liverpool's football is unlikely to display the same mesmerising conviction for the rest of the season as it did against them at Anfield. Maybe, but the gap between the Uniteds is now seven points — far from insurmountable, of course, with half the season to go but certainly daunting.

Football being the cruel game it is at times, Newcastle may yet stumble and fall. They proved themselves capable of it last season. On this evidence, though, Manchester United would struggle to capitalise even if invited to do so. Only as the match entered its final quarter did they begin even to flirt with the idea of launching a recovery. Had they succeeded, it would have represented an audacious act of piracy so outclassed were they on a stage which has often proved to their liking.

Liverpool will feel aggrieved that the margin of victory was so narrow for their performance was deserving of far more.

For once Alex Ferguson made no attempt to disguise his frustration with the team. Too often in the past he has chosen to defend the indefensible. He stopped short of actually lavishing praise upon Liverpool, but that is the nature of the beast.

"Our first-half performance was as lifeless as I have seen in many years," said Ferguson. "All things considered it was really poor."

Liverpool probably cannot capture the title this season but denying the old enemy from along the East Lancs Road would give them only marginally less pleasure than winning it themselves.

The two clubs "enjoy" a rivalry that too often threatens to breach the boundaries between sensible behaviour and undiluted hostility. United envy Liverpool's past, Liverpool envy United's present.

Though much of Sunday's taunting was in rather poor taste, it did at least generate an extraordinary atmosphere that at times seemed to drain away the fluidity and composure of even the most experienced players.

Liverpool's black November had served to raise the first pertinent questions about Roy Evans's hitherto successful managership. It was ironic really because, having used the safety-first policy of a five-man defence to lift his club away from the ruins of Graeme Souness's brief and turbulent reign, it was his sense of over-caution which many saw fit to decry.

Clearly Evans is not a man for turning. He has a belief in a system and there is no room for negotiation. With Ruddock and Babb absent through injury, the way was clear to revert to a more orthodox formation — circumstances had presented the manager with an opportunity to unburden himself.

Typically he chose not to do so. Jones moved to the left, McAteer to the right and Harkness to the centre. Not that any member of the Liverpool defence was required to break sweat until the latter stages.

That United departed for their half-time dressing-down just one goal adrift was remarkable. A lesser team would have been rendered helpless by the sheer ferocity of Liverpool's attacking football.

Once Robbie Fowler's splendid free-kick had drifted beyond the unsighted Schmeichel after 44 minutes the die was cast. Collymore went on to miss chance after chance — Schmeichel denied him eight times — but it did not really matter as Fowler wrapped up proceedings with a proficient finish just before the final whistle.

Cryptic crossword by Chifonie

Across
1 Women toy with small vegetables (6,7)
10 Prepare for alternative work on British Rail (7)
11 Shocking service makes one scowl (7)
12 7's distraught at an indication that something is missing (5)
13 Composer and artist call endlessly for new arrangement (9)
14 Relation formed when popular student takes a wife (2-3)
16 A meeting for a large number on the race track (9)
18 Retail outlet provides fresh silica with stone in it (9)
19 A skilled worker's close relatives (5)
20 Reckon to allow incursion of soldiers in a state of confusion (9)
23 Proprieties derived from custom or established behaviour (5)
24 The galley cabinet contains 60 per cent booze (7)
25 Having a liking for painting one found in intimate surroundings (7)
26 In an ideal situation for a meeting? Quite! (7,6)

Down
2 Something seen when the sun's gone down causes wolf great consternation (9)
3 It's not appropriate to upset a pot into it (5)
4 Part of the body prone to inflammation — when the sun is up? (5)
5 Trouble in Reading is deep-rooted (9)
6 Burn curry all around the restaurant! (9)
7 Get trace elements to recombine (5)
8 Is Lucifer responsible for dysfunctional marriage? (8,5)
9 Very upset, and with no one else around, apparently (6,7)
15 Spent, burnt material in fuse's unacceptable (6,3)
16 A bit of eclair in tea with fruit for a fickle person (9)
17 Self-control shown by the others in school (9)
21 Name first class country (5)
22 Fill a tankard? (5)
23 Inspector makes 23 across turn tail (5)

Last week's solution

Euro '96 draw

England face Auld Enemy

David Lacey

ENGLAND were this week given a draw for the 1996 European Championship which enhanced their chances of reaching the tournament's knock-out stage. But before that can happen, Terry Venables's players must face a passionate revival of football's oldest international fixture.

Switzerland will be England's opponents in the opening match of the tournament at Wembley on June 8. Holland, on the evidence of their Anfield performance last week, will provide the hosts' toughest opposition of the first round when they come to Wembley 10 days later.

In the play-off to join the other 15 finalists, Holland beat the Republic of Ireland 2-0, both goals coming from Patrick Kluivert, the gifted 19-year-old who had won the Champions Cup for Ajax last May.

Holland dominated the game from the start and the teenager drilled home the first in the 29th minute before coolly chipping the second close to time.

In the draw at Birmingham's International Convention Centre, the moment that drew the biggest gasp from the audience came when England were placed in Scotland's group.

The Draw

Group A
1. England
2. Switzerland
3. Holland
4. Scotland

Matches to be played at Wembley and Villa Park

Group B
1. Spain
2. Bulgaria
3. Romania
4. France

Matches to be played at Elland Road and St James' Park

Group C
1. Germany
2. Czech Republic
3. Italy
4. Russia

Matches to be played at Old Trafford and Anfield

Group D
1. Denmark
2. Portugal
3. Turkey
4. Croatia

Matches to be played at Hillsborough and City Ground

The two sides will come face to face at Wembley on June 15, having last met at Hampden Park in 1989, when Bobby Robson's team won 2-0.

The previous season Peter Beardsley scored the only goal against the Scots at Wembley. The countries have never played one another in the finals of a major tournament.

The annual fixture, first played in 1872, was abandoned after English fans had been involved in violence in Glasgow city centre before the 1989 match. There had been trouble the previous year and in 1977 Scottish fans, celebrating a 2-1 victory, invaded the Wembley pitch and demolished one of the goals.

Both Venables and Scotland's coach Craig Brown made the right sort of noises about always wanting to see the fixture revived. But, remembering how England lost their opening match of the 1988 European Championship to the Republic of Ireland in Stuttgart, it may be just as well they will not be encountering the Scots on June 8.

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The Washington Post · Le Monde

Tory crisis after another MP defects

Rebecca Smithers

JOHN MAJOR interrupted his holiday break at Chequers on New Year's Day to talk to his closest cabinet colleagues about the deepening crisis within Britain's Conservative party, caused by the defection of Tory MP Emma Nicholson to the Liberal Democrats.

Among those Mr Major consulted was Brian Mawhinney, party chairman, who is on holiday in America with his family but who has been asked for regular briefings on the situation which could lead to an early general election. The next meeting of the Cabinet is not due until next week, but Mr Major may summon key colleagues earlier if the in-fighting sparked by her defection gets even further out of hand.

Senior Tories on Monday conceded that Mr Major could be leading a minority government by the summer, as the Defence Secretary, Michael Portillo, reopened the divisions within the Conservatives by claiming it was "incredible" to suggest the party had lurched to the right.

In the wake of Ms Nicholson's defection, senior right-wing figures, including the former party chairman Lord Tebbit and failed leadership contender John Redwood, urged Mr Major to carry on until May 1997, but admitted that he could soon be without a majority.

Senior sources said this situation could come as early as the summer, with two byelections pending and forecasters predicting disastrous results in the May local elections.

Both Lord Tebbit and Mr Redwood said the Government should continue to govern as long as it could win a confidence vote. Mr Major has already stressed that he will not be forced into an early election and that he would not "cut and run" in the face of political difficulties.

Ms Nicholson, whose defection leaves the Government facing a majority of just one after the two forthcoming byelections, had said that the Conservative party's lurch to the right — particularly on Europe — had been one of the reasons why she decided to jump ship.

But on Monday Mr Portillo insisted on BBC radio that it was "very silly to say that the party has tilted to the right — that is completely incredible".

He added: "I think the party is probably much the same. We have a broad breadth of opinion within the party."

But leading figures on the Tory left immediately responded by saying that Mr Portillo was only exacerbating tensions in the party just as unity was needed to get over the defection of two backbenchers in three months. Alan Howarth, MP for Stratford-on-Avon, defected to Labour in October.

Peter Temple-Morris, MP for Leominster, who leads a recently launched pro-Europe and one-nation faction of Tory backbenchers, said Mr Portillo represented "the very worrying tilt to the right about which many of us are concerned".

He added: "I don't think that the torrent of personal abuse against Emma Nicholson is exactly helping."

The former prime minister, Sir Edward Heath, issued a rebuke to Mr Portillo and called for an end to recriminations. "What I regret is that members of the Cabinet should be indulging in this sort of language and this approach," he said. But Mr Redwood urged Mr Major to adopt more rightwing policies in order to try to claw back Labour's 30 per cent lead in the polls.

With Parliament due to resume on January 9, Mr Major has been concentrating his efforts on rallying grassroots supporters, by stressing his commitment to one-nation Conservatism and emphasising the Government's economic achievements.

The nine official Ulster Unionist MPs have confirmed that they will not seek to bring down the Government by voting against it, provided that the Government refuses to compromise in its demands for the IRA to begin disarming before Sinn Fein can join all-party talks.

But they were warned by the Northern Ireland Secretary, Sir Patrick Mayhew, not to expect special treatment in return for their pledge.

He insisted that the even-handed approach to the peace process in Ulster would continue despite the reduction in the Government's majority.

The shadow foreign secretary, Robin Cook, said the public could see for themselves that the Government was adopting a rightwing agenda designed for purely party political reasons.

"It is not a question of John Major himself being rightwing. It is that we have a weak prime minister who is running before the most vocal wing of his party," he said.

Come this way . . . Liberal Democrat leader Paddy Ashdown with Emma Nicholson PHOTOGRAPH: ANDY HALL

Why I left Tories, page 9
Comment, page 12

Black Watch troops 'joined Hong Kong triad'

Andrew Higgins in Hong Kong and John Mullin

SOLDIERS from the Black Watch, whose colonel-in-chief is the Queen Mother, were said this week to have become embroiled in the notorious Chinese triads in Hong Kong, where the regiment served until August 1994.

The Ministry of Defence is checking the reports, which appeared in the Hong Kong-based Eastern Express newspaper.

At least a dozen members of the Black Watch, officially called the Royal Highland Regiment, were said to have taken initiation oaths in Cantonese, mastered secret hand signals and assumed low-rank positions in the Sun Yee On triad.

The rank they are said to have held was "4 9", part of a complex numerological code designating criminal hierarchies dating back to the 17th century. Each gang member must make 36 loyalty oaths — the product of the numbers making up the rank's name.

British troops are alleged to have come into contact with triads while working as freelance bouncers in the bars and nightclubs of Wanchai, home of the fictional 1950s prostitute Suzie Wong, and a favourite destination for visiting servicemen.

The Sun Yee On is probably the largest of some 50 triad gangs operating in Hong Kong.

Triad secret societies trace their origins to the collapse of the Ming Dynasty in 1644. Initially patriotic rather than criminal, triads quickly turned from politics to extortion while retaining much of the original ritual. Many nightclubs, mah-jong gaming parlours and bars in Hong Kong pay protection.

Britain has cut its armed forces in Hong Kong in the past decade from nearly 13,000 to about 3,000. The Black Watch is due to go back next year for a final tour that will end with the arrival of the People's Liberation Army on June 30, 1997.

Year of the puppet, page 5

Ailing Saudi king hands reins to heir

GW: Jan. 7, 96

David Hirst in Beirut

KING FAHD this week handed over the effective government of Saudi Arabia, the world's largest oil exporter and a mainstay of western policies in the Middle East, to his half-brother, Prince Abdullah.

The ailing monarch, who is about 73 and suffered a debilitating stroke in November, has not formally abdicated. But the signs are that he has transferred power permanently to his heir apparent, who is about a year younger.

The succession — the fifth since the kingdom's founder, Abdul Aziz, died in 1953 — was always expected to be a difficult one. The laconic announcement of what purports to be a provisional transfer of authority does not inspire confidence that it has been smoothly accomplished.

On the contrary, its being prompted by King Fahd's illness rather than his death, and the possibility of his recovery, make it problematic. Not only are there rivalries within the House of Saud, but the regime is under challenge.

Among its problems are the growth of an Islamist opposition movement; a middle class seeking to break the princely monopoly on decision-making; cuts in the vast welfare system; high-level corruption; and foreign policies seen as subservient to the economic and political interests of the United States.

Prince Abdullah, who is known to favour less blatantly pro-American policies and more Arab self-reliance, will, at least, bring about a change of style and emphasis. The question is whether he may collide with those within the ruling family — notably the Sudeiri clan to which King Fahd belongs — who want to keep the kingdom on its present course.

Austria	AS30	Malta	46c
Belgium	BF75	Netherlands	G 4.75
Denmark	DK16	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 13	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 400	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 3,000	Switzerland	SF 3.30

Nuclear power: seeing the light after a false dawn

AS ONE of the original anti-nuclear energy activists who did speaking tours on the Continent and in Britain, beginning in 1972, I was happy to read "Britain opts out of nuclear power" (December 17). I do not, however, believe that British nuclear power was stopped because of the reported reasons: that it is uneconomical, cannot compete with other energy sources or is undergoing a privatisation process, though all are true.

In 1972, Britain was the world's leader in nuclear energy production. There was universal support from government, industry, political parties, and even anti-nuclear bomb groups. In addition, the great majority of citizens believed government and industry propaganda that nuclear energy was safe, pollution-free and would produce unlimited electricity that would be too cheap to meter.

The nuclear industry and government were both well aware of the same facts that I used in my presentations: that nuclear energy was dangerous, outrageously uneconomical, and would require astronomical government subsidies. If nuclear energy always was too expensive, what happened to make it unacceptable to government and industry now?

What happened in the past 20 years was that a citizen-based social movement educated and mobilised a popular majority of citizens on the deliberately hidden realities of nuclear energy's dangers and prohibitive costs. Nuclear power thereby became politically unviable, forcing government to change policy. A similar process happened in every other industrialised nation and is still to be culminated in France and Japan, the last two pro-nuclear power holdouts.

The demise of nuclear energy, therefore, was not caused by the sudden discovery by "City accountants in striped suits" of something they knew all along, that nuclear energy is uneconomical. Rather, the government was forced to opt out of nuclear energy because of the effectiveness of "people power", by which a majority of citizens pressured the elected government to do their will or suffer the consequences.

Although the ending of nuclear power is the result of democracy in action, the question for an advanced democracy remains: "Why did succeeding governments deceive the citizens on this critical issue for over 25 years?"
Bill Moyer,
The Channon, NSW, Australia

THE FIELD of nuclear science and technology is often the victim of the intentional misuse of words and events by self-interest groups.

The chief of the new UK utility, British Energy, announced recently that Nuclear Electric's application to build Sizewell C will be withdrawn and no use would be made of the existing planning consent for Hinkley C. In other words, the next two planned nuclear power units would not be pursued "for the moment".

Patrick Green, of the Friends of the Earth, proclaimed: "This is the final nail in the nuclear coffin." The Guardian Weekly ran an editorial on "UK nuclear power: RIP" (December 17). The lunatic fringe has curious opinions.

However, the purported front page news item ran under the heading, "Britain opts out of nuclear power" and contained entirely unjustified editorial comment on the news at hand.

What was the truth of the matter? Robert Hawley, British Energy's chief executive, actually said that, "Not only is it impossible to invest in new nuclear capacity at the moment because of the uncertainty over future UK energy prices, but the same goes for any other form of new generation in the short term."

Should then the headlines have read "UK opts out of energy"? Of course not, because Hawley went on to say, "Our AGR [Advanced Gas Cooled Reactor] and PWR stations have long planned operating lives ahead of them, and we need to consolidate their profitability."

Thus, a more accurate news item might have been headed: "Installed UK nuclear capacity saves the country from additional coal or gas generating capacity — and the consequent pollution." Or: "Nuclear saves this Green and Pleasant Land."

While we cannot expect the editorial staff to know enough to make these clear deductions, we should be able to expect a higher standard of journalistic ethics to reign in the production of a newspaper.
John Graham,
Golden, Colorado, USA

Poor lesson from Australia

I'M NO supporter of the British Labour party, but I can say from Australian experience that whatever other guidance Mr Blair derives from the Australian Labor Party ("Keating has a lesson for New Labour", December 17), he would do well to eschew an accord process.

Labor portrays the accord as a Grail, but in fact it is nothing but a pact between the political and industrial wings of the labour movement, one which institutionalised union influence at the heart of government and as a result, a low wage/low productivity relations system. Concluded over the heads of Australian workers, it has cost them dear.

This pact has in fact cut real wages (Mr Kettle's 7 per cent figure is only for full-time workers; overall there has been a decline of 1.4 per cent under Labor) and the latest accord actually guarantees a further cut of $8.25 a week to the lowest paid. Labor claims that the accord has been responsible for the decline in industrial disputes; in fact the rate of industrial disputes in Australia over the past decade tracked the OECD-wide trend down, bottomed out at a level much higher than that of our trading partners and for the last year has been rising again. November/December saw the worst outbreak of industrial conflict in more than a decade, with a national wharf strike costing the country £50 million. And the accord has ensured a rate of productivity increase which is at best mediocre.

The accord gives union bosses an undue influence, one which they have used to veto the industrial relations reform which is one of the most urgent priorities facing Australia. Without reform, the rank and file will continue to suffer the declining wages and living standards they have experienced under Labor.

If Mr Keating is defeated in the forthcoming election, it will be at the hands of disaffected erstwhile Labor supporters. How ironic it would be if Mr Blair were to adopt such a failed concept as the accord at the heart of his re-election strategy.
Peter Reith, MP,
Shadow Minister of Industrial Relations,
Canberra, Australia

World's children need advocate

GRACA MACHEL is to be commended for heading a two-year study of the impact of war on children (December 17). Unicef has been doing exactly that for some 50 years, alerting the world to the plight of children as the tragic events occur. Yet despite their reports being well-written and well-presented, their pleas on behalf of the world's children have often gone unheeded.

In part to address the shocking casualties inflicted, a World Summit for Children was held at the United Nations in New York in September 1990. Their World Declaration was inspiring and was followed by a Plan of Action. One of the opening sentences reads: "We have gathered here at the World Summit to undertake a joint commitment to give every child a better future." Concluding words included "peace, tolerance, understanding and dialogue".

Four months later, UN forces attacked Iraq. A Harvard University report described the children of Iraq as the most traumatised children of war ever found. And the children of Iraq are still suffering, five years on, from the current UN embargo.

So much for the World Summit for Children. So much for the UN Security Council whose permanent members supply 85 per cent of the weapons used to maim and kill children for commercial profit.

Some way has to be found to reduce the death, misery and destruction inflicted on children in times of armed conflict. The UN, sadly, is unlikely to be the vehicle for such an initiative.

Some nation or global organisation has to take this initiative and act as advocate for the children, giving them a voice for the first time. It would be a great step forward towards world peace if this happened.
John Wheeler,
Taupo, New Zealand

Confusion over vaccine pioneer

PAUL HOCKINGS (December 31) has failed to grasp the difference between vaccination and variolation. The latter, tried over many centuries, involved the use of material obtained from smallpox lesions, containing an unknown quantity of smallpox virus. It was a risky procedure and many contracted smallpox. Jenner, who survived variolation as a child, made the observation that milkmaids — who contracted cowpox from the udders of the cows they milked — were spared the ravages of smallpox. He then proceeded to inoculate others with a cowpox extract, containing the related but less hazardous cowpox virus, and demonstrated that this induced immunity to smallpox.

Cartoons in the national press suggested that vaccinated subjects might develop some of the physical attributes of cows but he persisted with this practice, which led to the global elimination of this dreadful infection and the development of other "vaccines".

The Jenner museum at Berkeley in Gloucestershire illustrates many aspects of his life and times, and it is indeed surprising that commemorative stamps are not being produced to mark the 200th anniversary of this discovery.
(Prof) Gordon Reeves,
Sultan Qaboos University, Oman

Briefly

IT WAS an encouraging change to read Francis Deron's assessment (Le Monde, December 17) of the parliamentary elections recently held in Taiwan. The article showed a noticeable diversion from the western media's tendency to portray the often stormy path of party politics in Taiwan as a mere object of derision. I share his dismay that a country in which a much larger percentage of the population partake in the democratic process than do in most other Asian states can continue to be officially ignored by the world community. For all the West's rhetoric about the virtues of democratisation in east Asia, it would seem that investment opportunities in China still speak louder than democracy in Taiwan.
Jeremy Taylor,
Sydney, Australia

RICHARD NORTON-TAYLOR ("The ghosts of Nuremberg", December 31) is right to be pessimistic about the forthcoming international tribunal in the former Yugoslavia. But the world's media can do something: they can remind us frequently and for years to come of the crimes these evil men and women committed. Radovan Karadzic may not rot in jail but we might have the pleasure of seeing him hounded for the rest of his life.
M Steiner,
London

I WAS puzzled to learn that the European Community has decided to call its currency the Euro in order to avoid naming it after an Australian animal. The Emu is indeed an Australian animal, but so is the Euro, which is also known as the common wallaroo (*Macropus robustus*).
Paul Wallen,
Katoomba, NSW, Australia

WILL one have to be confirmed Eurotic to qualify for Euro coins and notes, or will Eurosis set in only after the introduction of the new currency?
Peter Lodge,
Hull

THE FRENCH saying "manger de la vache enragée" is usually rendered as "to be hard up as hardly able to keep body and soul together". I have hitherto thought the literal translation too bizarre to be credible, but could it just mean to be reduced to eating meat unfit for human consumption?
Edwin Gilbert,
Malvern, Worcestershire

TODAY I overheard two children calling each other "beefbrain". Is this anything to do with BSE?
Richard Bramhall,
Builth Wells, Powys, Wales

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Arafat lambasted for poll meddling

Derek Brown in Jerusalem

THE Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, was sharply criticised on Monday by European Union observers of this month's general election for persistently meddling with the polling rules.

The PLO chief was lambasted — though not named — in a statement, headed Enough is Enough, from the head of the EU election unit, the former Swedish diplomat Carl Lidbom.

He obliquely questioned the independence of the election commission appointed by Mr Arafat and complained of confusion and uncertainty caused by a stream of decrees altering the election procedure.

He said: "The European Union electoral unit believes that the series of improvisations and irregularities should now cease if the forthcoming elections are to retain any credibility, both locally and internationally, and calls on the Palestinian National Authority and its chairman [Mr Arafat] to take urgent steps to try to build public and international confidence in the election process."

The strong language reflects the growing exasperation of the EU and other observers, who were warmly welcomed at the outset of the election process but have lately been given the cold shoulder by the Palestinian Authority.

The original election commission resigned last month to clear the way for a new, supposedly neutral commission to oversee the nomination of candidates, the campaign, and the polling, scheduled for January 20.

Mr Arafat, who took 40 days to promulgate the election law, finally signed it in early December. Since then he has issued decree after decree tinkering with procedure and in some cases making significant alterations.

Observers of his style are not surprised. For 30 years he has insisted on running the Palestinian cause as a one-man band. His inability to delegate has become the central feature of self-rule government, in which little is contemplated, let alone achieved, without his blessing.

The election machine, assembled over many months to give Palestinians their first experience of democracy, is now being run at least as much from Mr Arafat's headquarters in Gaza as from the electoral commission office in Ramallah.

He has arbitrarily increased the number of seats in the new council, from 82 to 87 at the last count. He has ordered the reopening of candidate nominations in all constituencies, not just the ones allocated extra seats.

Registration of electors was continuing last week, almost a fortnight after it was supposed to be completed. Most ominously, the official campaigning period has been cut from 22 to 14 days.

Mr Arafat has also, belatedly, appointed a PLO aide, Mahmud Abbas, to head the election commission. Mr Abbas, better known as Abu Mazen, was a principal architect of the first self-rule accord with Israel and is still said to be a close confidant of the PLO leader. He has yet to meet the EU observers to discuss their concerns.

Monday's statement acidly noted: "At such a meeting Mr Lidbom would have listened with interest to an explanation of why the central election commission was not set up earlier and why none of the allocations of seats was issued in the name of the central election commission, the supreme body organising the elections, which was given that specific task in the election law.

"The first allocation of seats was done instead by presidential decree and the number of seats has subsequently been changed twice, also by presidential decree. Mr Lidbom would also have welcomed reassurance from Mr Abbas about the political independence of the central election commission."

The EU, which has largely funded the election process, will have 300 observers in position by polling day. Hundreds more international monitors are expected from Japan, Norway, Canada and elsewhere.



Palestinians jeer as Israeli jeeps pulled out of the police station in the West Bank town of Ramallah last week PHOTOGRAPH: JEROME DELAY

Turkish parties unite to keep out Islamists

GW : Jan. 7, 96

Jonathan Rugman in Istanbul

THE leaders of Turkey's mainstream secular parties began talks on forming a possible three-party coalition government, in a blatant attempt to keep the Islamic revivalist Welfare Party — which won the December 24 general election — out of power.

The Welfare Party (or Refah) advocates an Islamic common market, pulling Turkey out of Nato and renegotiating the customs union deal with the European Union which the European Parliament ratified last month.

The party's promise of a "just order" for the poor and alienated won it more than 21 per cent of the vote, increasing its share of the 550 parliamentary seats from 38 in 1991 to 158.

Although Refah fell far short of winning the 276 seats needed to govern alone, the result has frayed the nerves of the secular establishment, sent the Turkish lira falling, and given radical Islamic elements their biggest boost in the republic's history.

Tying for second place, with more than 19 per cent of the vote each, were the two bickering pro-western conservative groups — the Motherland Party (Anap) of Mesut Yilmaz, and the True Path Party (DYP) of the outgoing prime minister, Tansu Ciller. Their leaders have agreed to work towards a coalition that would isolate Refah, but talks have become bogged down over the issue of who should become prime minister.

Ms Ciller and Mr Yilmaz cannot muster enough support between them to win a vote of confidence when parliament convenes later this month. They have therefore begun exploratory talks with two leftwing parties, headed by Ms Ciller's former coalition partner Deniz Baykal and the veteran Socialist Bulent Ecevit, who is vying for the premiership with Ms Ciller.

Yet a three-party, left-right coalition is a tried and tested recipe for political chaos in Turkey, where unstable governments led to three years of military rule, ending in 1983. "The whole economy is on standby because of the instability," said Atalay Sahinoglu, chairman of the Istanbul chamber of commerce.

Refah's leader, Necmettin Erbakan, aged 69, is resentful of attempts to deprive him of a leadership he believes he has won, and which he will soon be too old to re-contest.

The official election results are not published until later this month. A new Speaker must then be elected — a contentious issue as the honorary position is usually filled by the biggest party. Any party appointed by the president to form a coalition must win a confidence vote, and it may be February before the horse-trading ends and a new administration is in place.

A senior Refah official confirmed last week that contacts between Anap and Refah had begun, and he warned against any Algeria-style attempt to exclude Islamists from the political process. "If you prevent us from coming to the front, then the people will push us to the front."

But many Refah supporters believe that by going into opposition against a rickety coalition, the party stands a chance of performing even

Comment, page 12

Syria's talks with Israel place alliance with Iran under strain

GW - Jan. 7, 96

David Hirst in Beirut

ONE of the most enduring of Middle East alliances — between "radical" Syria and fundamentalist Iran — is under strain.

As Tehran announced at the weekend that its vice-president, Hassan Habibi, was cancelling a planned visit to Damascus, the Iranian press unleashed an unprecedented assault on Syria.

Damascus — which has renewed peace talks with Israel — was pilloried for its "humiliating and beggarly" discussions with the Israelis and its "ingratitude" towards Iran.

As an implacable enemy of the US-sponsored peace process, and chief backer of Islamist resistance to it, Iran cannot but see Syria's potential defection as a blow to its regional influence.

Tehran has expressed its concern at Syria's public support for the Gulf states in their territorial disputes with Iran; it has yet to take a position on Syria's stated interest in curbing the guerrilla war that the Iranian-backed Hizbullah is waging against Israel in south Lebanon.

The Tehran newspaper al-Jumhur al-Islami said on Monday: "After figuring for years in progressive and anti-Zionist ranks, Syria is now taking its place in the anti-Iranian camp as it submits to US and Zionist dictates."

South Lebanon is liable to emerge as a key arena of Iranian-Syrian friction. The Syrian foreign minister said in Beirut recently that Syria was "for calming things down", because the Israeli shelling of Lebanese towns and the Hizbullah's response, missiles on north Israel, sometimes went "beyond reasonable limits".

Last week Hizbullah leaders were in Tehran discussing the possible consequences of an Israeli-Syrian peace. They do not seem to have been reined in yet.

On Friday last week Hizbullah fired two Katyusha salvoes into northern Israel "in retaliation for the massacre of our civilians".

An Israeli minister warned Syria that if it was serious about peace, "it must stop the Hizbullah".

● Middle East peace negotiators from Syria and Israel met in rural Maryland last week for the first face-to-face talks in six months.

Hopes for a land-for-peace breakthrough were high on both sides.

Chirac tests unions' will by renewing call for cuts

Alex Duval Smith in Paris

FRENCH trade unions face an uphill task to renew nationwide strikes this year after President Jacques Chirac reaffirmed his support on Monday for government cuts to the welfare state.

In the traditional new year message, Mr Chirac confounded critics who had predicted prime minister Alain Juppé's imminent fall under the same axe as welfare benefits.

Speaking for the first time about the proposed cuts, which triggered three weeks of public sector strikes and demonstrations last month, Mr Chirac praised Mr Juppé's "courageous action".

He said the measures, such as increasing the years public sector workers must serve to qualify for a full pension, were pre-conditions to secure France's financial health.

The constitutional council has approved Mr Juppé's measures for eliminating the accumulated debt of the social security budget. They include an immediate 0.5 per cent income tax rise.

Mr Chirac said the changes to French society were "hard for many people" and appealed for revived confidence and greater dialogue.

Marc Blondel, leader of the Force Ouvrière union which, with the communist-led CGT spearheaded last month's mass demonstrations and nationwide transport and postal strikes, welcomed Mr Chirac's willingness to have a dialogue. "The problem is to know whether the prime minister will apply the recommendations," he said.

The unions had warned of further unrest this year unless the government made new concessions. But even though Mr Chirac and Mr Juppé remain low in the opinion polls, it is uncertain whether the unions can motivate workers to strike again. Just before Christmas, a survey found that 22 per cent of voters were "satisfied" with the president and the prime minister — an increase on the previous month's 14 per cent.

● France again defied world opinion and ignored objections by its European partners last week by setting off the fifth nuclear bomb in its resumed testing programme at Moruroa atoll in the South Pacific.

The blast was equivalent to "less than" 30,000 tons of TNT and is expected to be followed by a final explosion on the atoll this month.

President Chirac reduced the planned number of explosions from eight to six after international protests. Only Britain among European countries backed the French plan.

Peace goes according to plan – so far

THE commander of the Nato-led Implementation Force (I-For), Admiral Leighton Smith, said that the Bosnian peace plan had so far succeeded expectations, after opposing armies met the plan's first deadline, writes Julian Borger.

Government and rebel Serb forces have pulled back from 40 positions ringing Sarajevo laid down in the peace treaty.

Unfortunately for I-For the arrival of the 20,000 American troops in the 60,000-strong has not gone as smoothly. Most were held up by the much-delayed construction of a large pontoon bridge over the River Sava, which separates Croatia and Bosnia.

And a US Apache helicopter fired the first shot in the peace-enforcement campaign when an electrical fault "accidentally discharged" a missile into a Bosnian Serb hillside. There were no casualties.

But Adm Smith was jubilant, pointing out that the Bosnian Serbs had accepted the presence of Nato troops on territory under their control much faster than he or his military planners had foreseen.

The I-For commander admitted that he had so far enjoyed a honeymoon period, and that the peace plan would be put to far greater tests in the next few months, during which significant amounts of territory has to be exchanged, and the opposing armies demobilised.

● France vehemently denied making a deal to protect the Bosnian Serb military commander, General Ratko Mladic, from war crime charges after a newspaper reported that the two French pilots, released from Serb captivity last month, were tortured while under the general's control.

The French foreign ministry repeated no deal had been made.

● President Clinton has suspended US sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro.



A Serb mother mourns her son buried in land returning to government control PHOTO: ANJA NIEDRINGHAUS

Serbs dig up their dead

EYEWITNESS
Julian Borger

LIKE an episode from some mystical Balkan epic, the Serb dead are emerging from their graves and forsaking Sarajevo rather than suffer Muslim rule.

As the day nears when Serb suburbs of the Bosnian capital are to be handed over to the country's Muslim-Croat Federation under the Dayton peace accord, families have been arriving at Vlakovo cemetery to take away the bodies of relatives.

They come armed with spades and picks to dig up the decomposing cadavers, carrying the remains into exile in tin coffins strapped to trailers and roof racks.

It is a macabre and desperate act motivated by a deep-rooted attachment to ancestral land, a fear of desecration of burial plots, and a measure of political expediency.

The Serb leadership — having tried demonstrations, threats, and a referendum to forestall the transfer of Serb Sarajevo to government control — now appears to be pursuing the politics of the dead. The first exhumations were carried out in front of television cameras.

Under the Dayton plan, Serb forces are to withdraw from the Sarajevo area within 45 days. Forty-six days after that, government forces will be allowed to move in. When the transfer day comes, most local Serbs say they will be gone, along with their dead.

Srpko Gogic, one of the gravediggers at Vlakovo, five miles west of Sarajevo, helped relatives dig up the remains of four Serb soldiers. Even for a man accustomed to living among the dead, it was a harrowing experience. "The soil here is very dense. The air doesn't get to the bodies, so they take years to decay."

Throughout an otherwise brutal war, only one Serb cemetery has been vandalised on government-held territory.

The threat posed by the Muslim-Croat federation has been played up by a Serb leadership. And there is a deeper link in Serb minds between land ownership and ancestral burial sites.

More often than not, Serbs phrase their claims to land in terms of the number of their kin buried there.

A joke circulating in Sarajevo tells of a Croat, a Muslim, and two Serbs arriving on the moon. The Croat points at the lunar mountains and says: "Those are like the Dalmatian hills. This must be Croatian land." The Muslim argues the cratered surface resembles the shell-scarred roads of Sarajevo, "so it must be Muslim". One of the Serbs pulls a gun, shoots the other dead, and says: "A Serb has died here. This is Serb land."

The Week

PRESIDENT Clinton and Republican congressional leaders resumed talks aimed at reaching a balanced budget and ending a partial US government shutdown, though both sides were reported to be far apart on key issues that have caused 280,000 federal workers to be laid off for a record 18 days.

FACTION fighting among migrant workers home for Christmas and flash floods which swept away squatter camps claimed the lives of at least 300 people in South Africa.

PRESIDENT Boris Yeltsin left hospital and went on his first public walkabout since his heart attack last month. But the Russian leader refused to say whether he would seek re-election in June.

Washington Post, page 16

NIGERIA has been excluded from a Commonwealth meeting of parliamentary Speakers in Cyprus because of its poor human rights record.

SEVERAL Nigerian newspapers have named Ken Saro-Wiwa as their "Man of the Year", because of the barrage of criticism the execution of the Ogoni writer and activist brought down on military rule.

THE Israeli government has admitted that Israel was responsible for the murder of a Moroccan waiter who was mistaken for a terrorist in Norway in 1973, and has promised to pay compensation to his relatives.

NEARLY 300 Israelis showed up uninvited to the wedding of the sister of Yigal Amir, Yitzhak Rabin's assassin, in a show of support for the killer's family.

MAURICE PAPON, a French wartime civil servant in the Vichy government and a cabinet minister in the 1970s, has been indicted on charges of deporting hundred of Jews to their deaths.

FEDERAL agents in the US have arrested two men on charges that they attempted to blow up an Internal Revenue Service office in Reno, Nevada, by planting a powerful home-made bomb outside the building.

PRESIDENT Sylvestre Ntibantunganya of Burundi warned that his country is on the brink of collapse, blaming "fanatics" from the Hutu majority, Tutsi minority and the army for widespread bloodshed. More than 100,000 people are estimated to have been killed in Burundi since 1993.

A YOUNG man who jumped off the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge in a suicide attempt landed yards from a psychiatrist in a rowing boat with a lifejacket and a mobile phone.

Cult deaths repeat feared

Paul Webster in Paris

THE French prosecutor investigating the deaths of 16 people in the Order of the Solar Temple's second suicide-cum-murder fears the ritual could be repeated.

Two cult members, including a policeman, executed 14 members of the cult before setting their own clothes alight and committing suicide with police service revolvers.

The preliminary post-mortem findings on the 13 French and Swiss adults and three children found dead in a forest clearing at Saint-Pierre-de-Cherennes before Christmas, their bodies laid out in the form of a star, showed they had died a week earlier. They had all been burned. The adults were shot in the head and chest from close range, and the three girls had bullet wounds in the head. Two were daughters of one of the executioners whose wife also died.

Fifty-three members of the order died in similar way in October 1994 in Switzerland and Canada. The order has predicted a millennium doomsday and believes ritual sacrifice will save followers from the wrath of God. It has about 400 French members.

Le Monde, page 14

Porn crackdown on Internet

AN AMERICAN company barred worldwide access to 200 sex discussion forums last week after action by the German courts, *writes Martin Linton*.

The action was started by the Munich prosecutor against the Ohio-based CompuServe Inc on the basis of evidence that some of the forums were distributing child pornography.

CompuServe reacted with what some see as excessive zeal by closing access to all the alternative sex forums to its 4 million users in 140 countries.

The ban raises the issue of how far people exercising their freedom of speech on the Internet can be or should be subject to the national laws of other countries.

Dini makes instant comeback

John Hooper in Rome

IT WAS the least convincing attempt to leave the stage since the days of Maria Callas: Lamberto Dini remained in the prime ministerial chair this week, his resignation rejected by Italy's president.

But as Italy took over the presidency of the European Union on January 1, the complexion of the government in Rome which will chair the meetings and implement the policies of the EU in the next six months was still undecided.

Mr Dini, the former central banker whose unelected "government of experts" has been running the country for 11 months, tendered his resignation at the weekend. He was honouring an earlier promise as a way of thwarting a motion of no confidence.

But his offer was immediately turned down by President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro, who asked him to go back to parliament for a decision.

Mr Dini filled the breach on the collapse of Silvio Berlusconi's rightwing administration in 1994. The television magnate wants a return to the hustings.

But the left, Mr Berlusconi's former coalition partners, the Northern League, and President Scalfaro all fear that a fair election is impossible while the billionaire continues to control half of Italian television.

The left, which can muster a scant majority in parliament with the help of the Northern League, has thus found itself keeping Mr Dini in power at the head of a cabinet which, like its prime minister, leans to the right.

Until last month its policy appeared to consist solely of putting off an election until Mr Berlusconi lost the leadership of the right.

His once-glittering image is now much tarnished. He has made three failed attempts to topple the government and, later this month, is due to stand trial for bribery.

A further problem is that Italy has a hybrid electoral system which is thought unlikely to produce the sort of clear parliamentary majority needed for stable government.

MPs have two options. One is to hold an election before the end of the EU presidency. In that case, Mr Dini would almost certainly be asked to stay on until polling day at the head of a caretaker administration.

The other, surprisingly proposed by Mr Berlusconi, is to form a cross-party "government of all the talents".





Crunch time . . . The people of Hong Kong can no longer put off decisions about where their future lies as the changeover date of July 1, 1997 looms ever closer PHOTOGRAPH: PATRICK ZACHMANN

Hong Kong: year of the puppet

As China's placemen move in for the 1997 handover, thousands of the colony's residents must decide whether to stay or go, writes **Catherine Field**

THE OLD LADY meant well when she scrubbed the inside of her Yixing teapot. Pleased with her work, she tried to sell the antique vessel. But she did not know the true value of the Yixing lies in the residue of tea lining the pot, which imparts a unique savour. The pot was now worthless.

When people in Hong Kong discuss the future, they increasingly turn to that Chinese parable, for the coming year is crunch time. The way China handles the approach to its takeover of the British territory on July 1, 1997, will show if the seductive flavour of Hong Kong, its cosmopolitanism and enterprise, will survive — or whether the Communists will extinguish it forever.

In the 150 years since the fishing village was ceded to Britain after the Opium Wars, Hong Kong has become an "Asian Tiger". It has flourished because the finest British traditions — a free judiciary, sense of fair play and freedom of expression — have blended with the Chinese penchant for hard work and delight in trading.

"1996 is the worry," said Bob Broadfoot, an analyst with the Political and Economic Risk Consultancy. "If you are pessimistic about 1997, then 1996 is going to be the time when you do something about it."

Many view the coming 12 months with trepidation. They foresee a dangerous political void, with the British administration sidelined and China preparing puppets and grooming sycophants for Hong Kong's political succession. They see a short, rapidly dwindling time left to enshrine Hong Kong's rights and traditions into a legal bulwark that will fend off Chinese interference. Many talk of a wave of emigration and an exodus of business.

"Hong Kong is a vibrant, fast-paced place with a good infrastructure," said Victor Sin, a management consultant. "Its people are very hard-working. A lot work round the clock. But people will only stay if the situation is tolerable. If freedoms are curtailed to a drastic extent, people will move out."

So they wait, and wonder, and worry.

Fung Kai-keung earns HK$10,000 ($1,300) a month as a taxi driver; his salary goes to supporting his son who studies economics and finance in the US. His wife's salary pays the food and council rent.

"My son graduates in 1998," said Fung. "By then we will know what Hong Kong will be like. I've told him: 'If it's bad here, stay in New York.' I'm older, it doesn't make much sense for me to leave . . . my son's future is what matters."

Under the 1984 pact between Britain and China on the handover, Hong Kong was promised a high degree of autonomy as a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China, and will retain its capitalist system for at least 50 years after its return.

But China last month destroyed hopes that pro-democracy voices would be heard in the process to build the SAR government. It announced the composition of the 150-strong Preparatory Committee, which will hammer out the details of the transition from British territory to Chinese city — and revealed that it would be largely made up of mainland officials and pro-China figures in Hong Kong business and politics.

Governor Chris Patten promises his administration will co-operate with the committee to ensure a smooth transition, but there are increasing fears that it will become a shadow government, undermining the last 18 months of British rule, with China being consulted on every initiative. Indeed, the Governor's main role will be to preserve his dignity: the shrill personal abuse from Beijing of a couple of years ago (the choicer labels included "whore", "Fat Pang" and "tango dancer") has faded to silence; Mr Patten has become an irrelevance, a non-person.

As the territory heads towards a political void, many important, now solid institutions are likely to become directionless. Morale is plummeting in the civil service, despite efforts to reassure the territory's 190,000 government workers through informal, small get-togethers with Chinese officials. Services run by expatriates or pro-British locals risk being handed over to people who have one eye on the job and the other on the Chinese.

China has indicated that all judges will have to be reappointed after 1997, in a clear threat to judicial independence. Hundreds of local lawyers seeking a future escape route have already picked up qualifications in Singapore.

China's draconian state secrecy laws pose the greatest threat to Hong Kong's free press. Journalists are already concerned that self-censorship is curtailing freedom of expression. In its annual report, the London-based International Centre Against Censorship wrote that the Chinese government's "penetration and infiltration into the media is ubiquitous and utterly persistent, and has shaken the very foundation of Hong Kong's cherished press freedom".

The 14-year jail sentence handed down last month to China's leading dissident Wei Jingsheng — confirmed by a court of appeal — added to worries about ordinary citizens' futures after 1997. "If I manage to get into university here in Hong Kong, I definitely won't participate in any student union politics, in order to protect myself," said Peter Mok, aged 17.

According to a survey by the Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, almost 60 per cent of Hong Kong residents have little or no faith in the future leaders of the SAR government; only 6.1 per cent expressed "great" faith, and only 1.2 per cent said they had "very great" faith.

Emigration figures for 1995 are expected to be down on recent years — 61,600 left in 1994 compared with 53,400 in 1993 — but consulates report increases of as much as 20 per cent in applications and predict a migration surge. Some analysts suggest as many as 100,000 people plan to leave during the coming year.

More than 700,000 Hong Kong residents already hold foreign passports, and any mass exodus could cause the local currency to collapse. But millions either lack the wealth and connections to get a foreign passport, or run small, profitable businesses that give them a financial security they would not find abroad.

Hung Wah, aged 52, opened an electrical supply store in the colony's western district 20 years ago. The dimly lit store is typical of thousands of such shops in Hong Kong — small, yet efficiently run by an owner who works as many hours as it needs to get the job done. Hung's store was open on Christmas Day and Boxing Day, and he was there on New Year's Day, eager to sell.

The profits have not propelled Hung into the ranks of Hong Kong's wealthy, but over the years he has made enough to put his two daughters through school and support his parents, who live in Macau.

"This shop is my security," he said. "It gives me enough money to live well. If I went abroad I'd have to close it down, and what could I do in Canada? I'd be unemployed."

And some traders positively look forward to the handover. "Things will be better because all these tensions and worries about 1997 will be gone. There will be more Chinese here — that means more customers," said Yip Mei-kong, who has worked at a fruit stall for 40 years. "I buy apples and pears in the Beijing area during the summer, and it will be much easier to do business there."

At the beginning of 1996, Hong Kong is a fantastic story of success. The little territory competes with emerging giants such as Singapore, Taiwan and Malaysia. It is the world's eighth largest exporter and seventh biggest importer in merchandise trade, according to the World Trade Organisation.

Most experts expect the economy to maintain a 5 to 6 per cent annual growth rate over the next two to three years. When China takes over sovereignty it will also inherit Hong Kong's foreign reserves of more than US$51.8 billion — up from US$49 billion at the end of 1994 — the second-largest reserves on a per capita basis in the world.

But many business people quietly predict that Hong Kong, under the dead hand of Communist rule, will become bland and corrupt and shorn of its international role — in short, it would become like any medium-sized city in China.

A SURVEY of businesses by the government's Industry Department revealed more than three-quarters of 2,081 companies thought prospects were weak or uncertain in 1996, and 87 per cent believed their post-1997 future was uncertain.

Many are troubled by the institutional void and wonder how business disputes will be settled fairly and swiftly, and who will take ultimate control over the Hong Kong dollar.

The Bank of China now issues 20 per cent of the territory's banknotes, under a cautious approach by the administration to give the Chinese experience of monetary policy in a capitalist economy. But there is no guarantee that the pragmatic approach of today will survive after 1997; China's own approach on monetary policy over the past two years has been to open up and then choke credit for individual entrepreneurs, while keeping the banknote presses rolling to fund decrepit state enterprises.

Above all, there is a pervasive anxiety about corruption, which is endemic in China, and seen as likely to overwhelm Hong Kong, where it is relatively under control.

"[Chinese] influence will increase more and more in terms of politics and economic activities. They will want a bigger slice of the cake and they want more say in our economic policies," said Victor Sin. "China will have a presence here, but they will have to prove themselves, earn their credibility." — *The Observer*

Judicial killings are on the increase as the American public backs a tough stance on crime, writes **Ian Katz** in New York

3,000 await execution boom in US

PRISON authorities are preparing for an "execution boom" this year after 1995 saw the largest number of judicial killings in the United States since 1957.

The US executed 56 killers last year as public support for capital punishment hardened and debate over its morality has almost ceased.

With more than 3,000 inmates on death row and several legislative moves to cut short the appeals process pending, death penalty opponents predict a fresh surge in the rate of executions.

"At one time a few years ago I could name everyone who had been executed in this country since 1976," said Stephen Bright, director of the Atlanta-based Southern Centre for Human Rights. "Now I can't even keep up with the number, and that's all I do."

Anti-death penalty campaigners predict that the annual rate of executions will soon pass 100.

Since the US Supreme Court lifted a ban in 1976, 38 states have returned the death penalty to their statute books with two more, Iowa and Wisconsin, pledged to reintroduce it.

While protests over more violent forms of execution have prompted most states to switch to lethal injection, several, including Florida, Georgia, Indiana and South Carolina, still use the electric chair.

Unless the condemned man changes his mind, a firing squad in Utah will this month shoot dead John Taylor, a child-murderer who has embarrassed the state by exercising his right to be put to death by the traditional method.

With the country gripped by a tough-on-crime mood and violent crime rates falling sharply, public doubts about the death penalty have all but evaporated.

The voices of those who point out that the sharpest crime drops have been in states, such as New York, where the death penalty was not applied, are easily drowned out by supporters of capital punishment attributing falling murder rates to increasing numbers of executions.

Most strikingly, the removal last year of federal funding for the legal centres which provide representation for death row inmates raised scarcely a protest. Anti-death penalty campaigners say closing centres will leave hundreds of condemned men and women without lawyers.

"The big debate before was whether, when the numbers got up this high, people would react with revulsion or indifference," says Mr Bright. "Clearly 1995 would indicate the answer is indifference."

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Forbes makes his money talk



ILLUSTRATION: NICOLA JENNINGS

The US this week

Martin Walker

IT IS becoming increasingly difficult to take seriously the Republican party's approach to the presidential election that will take place 11 months from now. Five of the main candidates failed to gather the 1,000 signatures required to get on the ballot for the primary in the state of Rhode Island.

Rhode Island is a small state, but it is part of the five-state grouping that will hold the Yankee primary on March 5. Not to be on the ballot smacks of an amateurism in political organisation that is bizarre. Only the front-runner, Senator Robert Dole, his colleague Senator Richard Lugar, and the former governor of Tennessee, Lamar Alexander, won a place on the ballot.

Senator Phil Gramm, the right-wing nationalist Pat Buchanan, Congressman Robert Dornan, and the black conservative and anti-abortion campaigner, Alan Keyes, all failed to make the ballot. And so, oddly, did Steve Forbes, whose success elsewhere in the Republican primary stakes is another reason to marvel at the botch the Republicans are making of their attempt to unseat President Clinton.

It is becoming ridiculous. If the opinion polls are right, Forbes is the only one serious challenger to Dole in the crucial early primary states of Iowa, New Hampshire, Arizona and Delaware. And he is a man who has never been elected to anything, has never run anything except the business magazine empire he inherited, and wants to return the US to the gold standard.

Forbes has simply ignored the party machines and local political bigwigs to appeal directly to the primary voters through paid TV ads. For the past eight weeks, the Forbes ads have been running 18 times a day on all the TV networks in all the early primary states. This is the kind of media blitz that normally doesn't happen even in the last week of a hard-fought campaign. Two months before the first primaries, it is unheard of. But it is working.

Breakfast time in the first primary state of New Hampshire, the 6.59am slot just before the morning news. The owlish face peers through the thickest of spectacle lenses, and the prim little mouth purses into a smug and constant smile. "I say scrap the income tax. Scrap the Internal Revenue Service. Scrap the tax code. Put in a low flat tax. It's simple. It's honest. And that's a big change for Washington."

It goes on all day. Then just before the 6.30pm national news, there he is again. "He's been called a champion of economic growth and a visionary. He is Steve Forbes." The owlish blink, the cheery dimples, the upbeat message: "America's best days are still to come."

Until now, Forbes was best known for his father, a bizarrely ambivalent figure, the son of an immigrant from Scotland who succeeded in the US with a sternly Calvinist approach to hard work and success. He built his Forbes magazine empire by relentlessly boosting wealth and free markets, and glorying in the trappings of wealth, from his French chateau to his island in Fiji, from his 151ft yacht, The Highlander, to his private plane, The Capitalist Tool.

He tried politics, getting elected to the New Jersey state legislature and twice running for governor. But when that career stalled, he decided to throw off the Calvinist cloak and have fun. It became the mid-life crisis that never stopped. He became a bisexual biker who dressed in black leather and roared up to gay bars on his Harley-Davidson, took up hot-air ballooning and hang-gliding. Until his death in 1990, the elder Forbes was the most lavish party-giver of his time, spending $2 million on his 70th birthday thrash in Morocco, where his escort was Elizabeth Taylor.

"It would be silly to try to imitate my father," says Forbes the younger. "Learn his approach to life, yes. But take up hang-gliding in some competition to prove who is the more daring? No."

A chess-player whose college sports credentials at Princeton were won by scoring the games and organising the away matches rather than by playing, young Steve was brought up in the Calvinist mould. Every Saturday his father would take 70 corporate and political bosses from Manhattan up the Hudson river on board the family yacht. At the end of the cruise lay West Point, the US military academy, where Forbes rented a box to watch the weekly football games. Young Steve had to spend every Friday evening and Saturday morning with a pile of photographs, learning by heart the names and faces of each of the guests.

"At an early age, we were expected to know, so to speak, where our bread was buttered," he recalls. He followed dutifully in the family footsteps, going to his father's old college of Princeton, and starting a national magazine while still an undergraduate. Called Business Today, a monthly aimed at career-minded college students, it now has a circulation of 200,000.

The heart of the company remains Forbes magazine, which now boasts a higher circulation and more pages of advertising than the veteran Fortune business magazine. That is one achievement of which Steve Forbes can justifiably boast to the voters. The other is that he is the only financial journalist to have won four Crystal Owl awards, given by the USX corporation for the most accurate economic forecasts.

That success in the stewardship of the publishing empire gave him the confidence to branch out into public life. Two years ago, he agreed to take over the chairmanship of Empower America, the political vehicle for former Congressman Jack Kemp and the free-market zealots among the Republicans. When Kemp decided that his social views on race and immigration were too progressive for the Christian Coalition, and decided not to run for the presidency in 1996, Forbes decided that the cause still deserved a champion. Pressed by the supply-side economists who had backed Ronald Reagan, such as Jude Wanniski and Arthur Laffer, he declared his candidacy last September.

The quixotic campaign was instantly and widely derided as "Perot Lite", another mega-rich ego looking to exchange disposable income for political fame. But Perot had the advantage of novelty. There was no parallel flood of free media interest in the Forbes announcement. So he set out to buy some.

Thanks to well-intentioned reforms of the campaign finance rules, American politics has become the playground of the rich. If you set out to raise money from the public, from business and from lobby groups in the traditional way, the rules limit a candidate to a maximum $1,000 a head from individuals, and $5,000 a head from political action committees. But spend your own money, and the sky is the limit. Ross Perot spent $60 million of his own money in 1992, roughly $3 for each vote he received, to get 19 per cent of the presidential poll.

Because Dole and Gramm and other candidates have applied for federal funds to match personal contributions and finance their campaigns, they have to abide by the federal election rules which limit them to spending $1.1 million each in Iowa and $600,000 each in New Hampshire. By not applying for federal funds, Forbes can spend as much as he likes.

And while the others follow convention and spend money on large campaign offices with full-time staff who take polls, run telephone banks and canvass door-to-door, Forbes just buys TV time. No political analyst can wholly explain the sudden Forbes phenomenon. Partly it is America's perennial love affair with the super-rich, whenever they deign to come down to press the flesh of ordinary mortals. Partly it is the power of his TV advertising blitzkrieg. Partly it is the novelty of his ideas, but mainly it is political desperation among Republicans who are sure Bill Clinton is beatable, but cannot yet discern any conventional politician who looks able to win the election in November.

Dissatisfaction with the rest of the Republican field, led by 72-year-old Senator Dole, is the dominant political mood as the election year opens. All the opinion polls currently show Clinton beating Dole by at least a 10-point margin.

Tax reform lies at the heart of the Forbes campaign. He wants to scrap income tax altogether and replace it with a flat tax. The first $36,000 of household income would attract no tax at all. Thereafter, all income would be liable to a flat tax of 17 per cent, with no exceptions for mortgage payments, no capital gains taxes, no other federal taxes at all.

There is a Wall Street wing to the Republican party which is bored by the debates over abortions and family values that preoccupy the religious right, and which frets at the message of hair-shirt austerity of the Republicans in Congress who want to cut government spending to balance the budget. Made up of the big corporate tycoons and heirs like Pete Du Pont (of the chemical giant), Leonard Lauder (the cosmetics fortune), and Ace Greenberg (Bear Stearns brokers), this Wall Street group loves the unabashed capitalism of Forbes the magazine, and is beginning to punt a few millions on Forbes the man.

JUST before Christmas, they organised a "Friends of Forbes" fund-raising dinner, at which 1,500 Wall Street types paid $1,000 a plate to the only candidate who believes in bringing back the gold standard. Forbes is their man, unfailingly sunny and upbeat in his promise of growth through tax cuts, and rich enough to mount devastating negative ads against his better-known rivals.

"The Senate was to vote on term limits in October. But it didn't. Would you believe Senate Majority leader Bob Dole cancelled the vote? So there will be no vote in the Senate on term limits this year," says the owlish grin. "I'm Steve Forbes. Senator Dole is wrong. Term limits will restore honesty to Washington, and that's the kind of change we need."

Forbes has no time for Gramm's politics of resentment against the welfare class, and his demand "that those in the wagon get out for once and help the rest of us push".

"The genius of America is that we have entrepreneurs to design and build engines to pull wagons, so people don't have to," says Forbes, who is firmly convinced that his free-market optimism is the only way the Republicans can stop Clinton.

"I really believe this, that in post-cold war America, a new era can be born, with personal computers spreading power to the people and away from the big government bureaucrats. We can free people from the state, with their own pensions saving accounts, their own health-care insurance, their own choice of school through vouchers. We can give individuals more power, more control, more opportunity and more choice. That is the essence of the American experiment and we have to get back to it."

'Correctness' row halts slave display

THE Washington establishment was plunged into yet another bruising row over political correctness last month, as an exhibition on slave life in the old south was cancelled after black groups said it was racist, *writes Jonathan Freedland in Washington.*

The Library of Congress announced that it had scrapped "Back to the Big House: The Cultural Landscape of the Plantation" after black workers at the library said they were offended. The collection of photographs and accounts depicting the daily life of slaves in the American south had won wide acclaim travelling around the US, before its arrival in Washington.

But African-American staff members and officials took umbrage at the show and within two hours of its installation it was withdrawn, library officials confirmed.

The cancellation was the second by the library within a month. Two weeks earlier the library scrapped a show on Sigmund Freud, after anti-Freud academics claimed Freudianism was a discredited theory.

"There is an atmosphere of fear at the library now," one official told the Washington Post. He added that the Freud exhibit was withdrawn because managers feared the religious right would condemn sexually explicit material in it and pressurise the Republican-led Congress to cut the library's funding. "This time it's fear of maybe a dozen black staff. This is all really scary," he said.

About 20 black employees complained about the plantation display, taking particular offence at pictures of slave quarters. They also disliked the term Big House, slave parlance for the white plantation master's mansion.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
January 7 1996

US military on trial in Okinawa

A tiny island south-west of Japan has been Little America for 50 years. But the rape of a 12-year-old schoolgirl has enraged locals and boosted their desire to get the US troops out. **Andrew Higgins** reports

MAJOR Edmund Memi of Brooklyn, New York, is explaining why the 18th Air Wing needs its own 18-hole golf course bang in the middle of Okinawa and why the US Air Force should never surrender an inch of its 11,500 acres of prime Japanese real estate.

"We've got men here who are used to the American way of life," he says. "Back home in the States this is perfectly normal. It is not an extravagance. It is provided for the morale of our troops. All work and no play helps nobody. We'd rather have our men hitting golf balls than hitting . . ." He stops himself abruptly in mid-sentence.

He has struggled valiantly for more than an hour to avoid the real issue in Okinawa and prove that 28,000 US troops pose no theat to anyone.

Sure, a few Japanese want back some of the land they lost in 1945 (he scoffs at "tatami mat" landlords). Yes, they might resent their property being used by a foreign military to play golf, fly (and sometimes crash) F-15 warplanes and store 54,000 tonnes of munitions, including, though nobody will say so officially, nuclear warheads. And, of course, the neighbours don't like it when fighter squadrons take off in the middle of the night ("We try to avoid it but you don't go to war in the dark if you don't practise in the dark").

Surely, though, a few grumpy neighbours is small price to pay for half a century of peace and stability? "We are not here for ourselves but for the good of Japan and the rest of Asia."

The sentence left unfinished by Major Memi at the Kadena Air Base is completed in grisly detail a few miles down Highway 58 in Hearing Room 201 of the Naha District Court. Here, in a hall so scrubbed and polished it glows antiseptic white, there is no dodging what soldiers are capable of doing in their free time — when not hitting golf balls, watching NFL football matches and Playboy channel movies on cable TV or guzzling duty-free bottles of beer at on-base bars.

The court starts its business for the day at 10 o'clock sharp. First to appear before a panel of three black-robed judges is US Marine 1st Class Joshua Hill. He makes a swaggering entry wearing handcuffs and a T-shirt that says "Boss". He is accused of bludgeoning a 24-year-old Japanese woman to death with a hammer. He admits to hammering her head but says he did not mean to kill her.

Before they can decide how long to lock him up for, the judges (there is no jury) want to know how many times he hit his victim, a shop assistant called Kanako Kinjo. The prosecution estimates the number of hammer blows to the head at 70; the defence suggests "only" 20; Hill, a Korean-Afro-American from Ohio, grunts and rolls his eyes.

He is no more helpful on the question of motive. He mutters something about bad driving but declines to elaborate. His lawyer, Mistunobu Matsunga, asks for psychological tests "because what he did was not understandable". The judges, no less baffled, set another hearing in a fortnight's time.

After a break for lunch, the Japanese justice system has its second encounter of the day with the US Armed Forces in Hearing Room 201. The afternoon session centres on the abduction and gang rape of a 12-year-old Japanese schoolgirl. Sitting handcuffed at the front of the court are two more Marines, this time from Georgia, and a Texan in the Navy. Also in court are two of their mothers and a wife.

The three men allegedly seized the girl as she walked home from buying school notebooks in a village shop. After forcing her into a white rental car, they bound her wrists with tape and drove to a sugar cane field in the north of Okinawa. There she was raped and then dumped, semi-conscious and badly battered.

Again, there are confessions and again the task faced by the judges is less one of choosing between guilt and innocence than calibrating degrees of a horror that defy understanding. (All three admit to planning and then carrying out the abduction but disagree on who did exactly what in the car.)

Even defence witnesses splutter with appalled incomprehension. "As the father of two children I find it difficult to believe that anyone could be capable of doing something like this, especially to a child," says John Deardorff, a military officer called to act as a character witness for 22-year-old Naval recruit Marcus Gill. All he can offer by way of mitigating circumstances is a dim recollection that Gill had put on weight at the time of the rape and worried about flunking his physical: "He was upset about his weight control problem."

The response of Okinawa, scene of a bloody second world war battle in which more than 200,000 died, has been one of predictable outrage. The Pentagon, and much of Tokyo's political élite, voice revulsion while praying that the horrors of Hearing Room 201 will soon be forgotten. The case of Joshua Hill — now known to his Marine Corps buddies as "MC Hammer", an allusion to the American rap musician — may well fade from memory. The press has shown little interest in his victim. One of the few newspapers to report the case regularly is the US military's own in-house publication, Stars and Stripes.

The indifference has a reason: the murdered woman mixed with marines. Even zealous critics of military violence suggest this somehow explains her fate. "Using a hammer should be recognised as a violent act but this killing was a personal matter between two people," says Iha Yoichi, a trade union leader and activist in a campaign to get US soldiers out of Okinawa.



But passions aroused by the rape of a pre-teen schoolgirl untainted by any past association with her attackers show no sign of abating, despite a claim by the Pentagon that a recent visit to Japan by US Defence Secretary William Perry had "put the Okinawa problem behind us".

The furore has claimed the career of Admiral Richard Macke, overall commander of US forces in the Pacific. He took early "retirement" after an off-colour remark that the accused rapists could have hired a prostitute with the money they spent hiring a car to abduct the schoolgirl.

The Pentagon, and much of Tokyo's political élite, voice revulsion while praying that the horrors of Hearing Room 201 will soon be forgotten

Three months after the crime entered vocabulary as the *reipu jiken* — rape incident — the parking lot of the District Court in Naha, Okinawa's capital, is clogged on trial days with television crews and satellite transmission vans.

A helicopter clatters overhead taking aerial shots for a Japanese network. So many journalists and ordinary Okinawans want a seat in the Room 201 that court officials hold a pre-trial lottery of courtroom tickets. (Hill draws only a handful of spectators.)



A women's group outside Japan's foreign ministry in Tokyo protests against the US military presence PHOTOGRAPH: KATSUMI KASAHARA

The overkill might not match the pandemonium that surrounded the O J Simpson trial in Los Angeles but there are still plenty of kibitzers eager to pronounce on proceedings. As in LA, the hot issue is race — at least for the Americans. All the defendants are black.

On hand to monitor the trial for any hint of racial bias is a representative of the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People, two American lawyers who spend their time sniping at the Japanese defence team, and various emissaries from Georgia, home state of two of the accused. "There is so much publicity surrounding this trial you have to ask yourself whether the case is really being tried in there or in the court of public opinion," says Rose Johnson, a member an Atlanta-based group called the Centre for Democratic Renewal.

Michael Griffiths, a lawyer representing the Georgians — Marine Privates 1st Class Rodrigo Harp and Kendrik Ledet — wants the trial moved elsewhere. He accuses Okinawa's governor, Masahide Ota, of "poisoning the integrity of the judicial process" with an advertisement in the New York Times in which he cited the rape as an argument for the closure of US bases.

For Okinawans, whose distaste for the American military goes hand in hand with a deep mistrust of Tokyo, it all smacks of yet more unwelcome meddling by outsiders. A tree outside the courthouse has been hung with a stencilled sign in broken but unambiguous English: "To beggar soldiers! We've paid you for everything even a bite of bread. If you have a piece of pride GET OUT."

The biggest and most violently wayward US contingent in Okinawa is the Marine Corps. Its Third Expeditionary Force, which calls itself the "Tip of the Spear", has 18,000 men, more than 60 per cent of them under the age of 21.

Each new marine gets a booklet to explain his mission: "Marines stationed here are part of the forwardmost defence against any potential hostile aggression towards the United States in the Pacific theatre . . . When they're not training hard, they're playing hard. Immeasurable time and effort have been selflessly provided over the years by hardcharging volunteers to make the lives of their neighbours better."

And those who charge too hard?

"If your actions result in serious injury or death to a Japanese . . . you should offer compensation of up to $1,000."

The text, like much else about the US military presence in Okinawa, is badly outdated, a relic of the simple certainties of preppy 1950s soda fountain sports rhetoric and Cold War Pax Americana in the Pacific.

"You don't have to be Thucydides or Henry Kissinger to realise that this situation is highly unstable and could blow up in our faces," says Chalmers Johnson, head of the Japan Policy Research Institute in California. "Japan must become a normal country and we must end our protectorate. We are defending a country while going into debt to it to the tune of $60 billion a year." When Washington last fully revised its security treaty with Tokyo in 1960, the US was 11 times richer than Japan. Today, it is only 1.3 times wealthier.

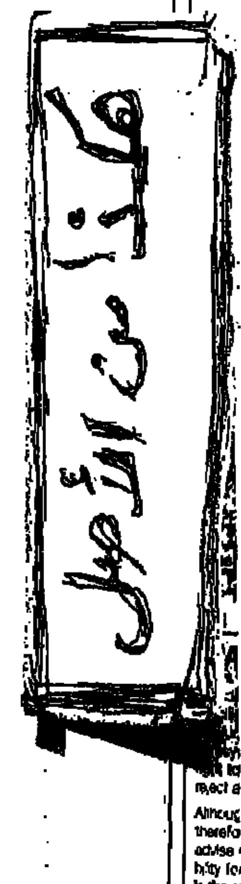
The Pentagon dismisses such logic as isolationist claptrap. It also unnerves many Japanese and other Asians. Singapore's elder statesman, Lee Kuan Yew, says encouraging Japan to build up its own military is "like giving a chocolate liqueur to an alcoholic".

After reluctantly promising to slash US troops levels in Japan and Korea in 1990 and then again in 1992, the US defence department has reversed itself with an unequivocal commitment to maintain "a stable forward presence" in Asia of 100,000 men. It argues that it is cheaper to keep American troops in Japan, where Tokyo is supposed to pick up 70 per cent of the tab, than back home in the United States. (South Korea pays nearly 90 per cent of the cost of keeping 37,000 American soldiers.)

The arrangement used to suit all sides — except for the Okinawans, whose tiny island plays host to two-thirds of all US ground troops stationed in Japan. The rape, however, has served as a catalyst for a more general, albeit unfocused, sense that something must change.

But what? Few Japanese want to drive out US troops altogether; fewer still are ready to share Okinawa's burden and welcome teenage marines into their own neighbourhood. "The cold war in Europe ended when people tore down the Berlin Wall. It has ended in Asia with the rape of a 12-year-old schoolgirl," claims Rose Johnson. "American troops in Japan look a lot like the Russian troops who lingered in East Germany for years after the Wall came down. Vested interests are fighting, but it is all over."

For Okinawans, though, it is far from over. At the Hamagawa Junior School, teachers still get drowned out in the middle of lessons by the din of F-15s coming in to land at the nearby Kadena Air Base. The school principal, Higa Hideo, still has to interrupt assembly meetings to wait for the noise to die down. However, he does thank the US military for one thing: "Because of all their noise pollution, students greet me very boisterously in the morning. Here we all know how to shout."



The Week in Britain James Lewis

Precarious peace fails to stop bloody Irish justice

THERE HAVE been an estimated 263 "punishment beatings" in Northern Ireland — 87 loyalist and 176 republican — since the ceasefire was declared in 1994. More worryingly, there have been seven killings since last April, four of them in the past month. An outfit calling itself Direct Action Against Drugs, generally supposed to be the IRA in another guise, has said it carried out two of the killings last year.

Under cover of the paramilitary warfare, there has always been a subculture of social terrorism, drug trafficking, protection rackets and other forms of criminality in Northern Ireland. The continuing violence may well be a settling of old scores, or even an attempt by the IRA to consolidate its grip on republican strongholds at a time when the writ of the (overwhelmingly Protestant) police is slowly gaining acceptance.

The uneasy situation did not deter the Prime Minister, John Major, from making a pre-Christmas visit to Ireland and meeting his Dublin counterpart, John Bruton, who said that in response to the killings, and to the discovery of an IRA plot to carry out a series of armed robberies, he had dropped plans for the early release of republican prisoners. Sinn Fein has refused to condemn the violence — saying only that it "does not condone" it — which led Mr Major to denounce the "fiction" that Sinn Fein and the IRA were separate organisations.

Echoes from the past will continue to haunt the various parties in the conflict as they inch their way painfully towards a permanent settlement.

One such was the payment by the British government of nearly £40,000 to relatives of three IRA members who were shot dead by security forces in Gibraltar in 1988. The money was to cover their legal costs in taking a case to the European Court of Human Rights. The court had ruled that the killings were a breach of the European Convention on Human Rights, but rejected claims for compensation.

Hugo Young, page 12

CONSERVATIVE Eurosceptics and others delivered a humiliating end-of-term rebuff to the Government by narrowly defeating it in a Commons vote on fisheries policy. The vote itself — an insignificant motion to "take note" of the Government's approach to the EU's Commons Fisheries Policy (CFP) — meant nothing in itself. But it did emphasise the vulnerability of the Tories' dwindling parliamentary majority.

Fishermen, concentrated in just a few constituencies, have been seriously hit by the EU's policy of conserving stocks by severely reducing catch quotas, and have been angered by the incursion of Spanish trawlers into fishery areas once held to be exclusively British. In an overnight haggle in Brussels, the day after the vote, Britain did manage to achieve higher catch quotas than scientists had recommended, but fishermen's organisations were not placated.

Under new arrangements which took effect this week, Spanish vessels were heading for the so-called Irish Box, between southern Ireland and the English and Welsh coasts, where the CFP allows them to fish for the first time. They were being watched by one fisheries protection vessel and surveillance aircraft to see that they do not exceed their catch quotas or otherwise bend the rules.

THE PRIVATISATION of rail passenger services got under way in earnest when the first franchise, covering routes between London and the South-west, was sold to the country's biggest bus company, Stagecoach Holdings. The company promised to run 86 per cent of existing services, improve some stations, and provide dedicated bus links.

But the transport select committee of the Commons recently uncovered the fact that Stagecoach has been referred to the Office of Fair Trading on no fewer than 24 occasions, and reprimanded by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission for "predatory and deplorable behaviour".

There was also anxiety about the credentials of bidders for other rail business. Omnitrax, the US company bidding for British Rail's three freight businesses, is in partnership with a US construction group, Peter Kiewit, which is involved in a criminal investigation into the multi-billion dollar Los Angeles subway project. And Wisconsin Central, which last month took over the royal train and mail-carrying services, is in partnership with a New Zealand merchant bank, Fay Richwhite, which is being investigated over alleged tax fraud.

THE NEW YEAR Honours List, a lacklustre affair, was criticised for its inclusion of Tory financial backers. John Prescott, Labour's deputy leader, singled out the knighthood conferred on Graham Kirkham, a Thatcherite businessman, who is believed to have given the Conservative party a £4 million bridging loan. Downing Street said the award was for "charitable services" and that his political service was not a factor.

Another knighthood, "for services to the electrical retailing industry", went to Stanley Kalms, chairman of the Dixons store chain, who makes a personal donation to the Tories on top of his company's annual £25,000.

Austin

GOVERNMENT WHIPS OFFICE

FISH REBELS WET

FISH REBELS DRY



Ice age . . . a motorist in Whitby, north Yorkshire, is stranded by heavy snow PHOTOGRAPH: GRAEME STOREY

Freezing weather takes its toll

Guardian Reporters

FREEZING FOG and sub-zero temperatures throughout last week disrupted many parts of England and Wales and almost all of Scotland.

In Shetland, hundreds of islanders spent days without power as emergency services fought to restore electricity cut off by the ferocious weather on Christmas Eve.

Throughout the country elderly people waited to hear whether they could qualify for cold weather payments as temperatures fell to minus 20C in parts of Scotland.

Labour MP George Foulkes called for a "double premium" to be paid when temperatures fell below minus 10C for 24 hours.

The Government said that the £8.50 per week payment, to help those on income support cope with heating bills during cold snaps, would be made across the country.

The Department of Social Security said that the payments had so far been triggered in virtually the whole of Scotland, Tyneside, Teesside, Carlisle, Manchester, Birmingham, North Yorkshire, West Yorkshire, West Midlands and Wiltshire.

Under existing legislation only three groups are eligible for cold weather payments: families with children under five, the disabled and long-term sick, and pensioners.

The severe weather led to several deaths. In West Yorkshire a team of 20 doctors and nurses lost a five-hour battle to save the lives of a young girl and two men who were submerged in a freezing lake after two rescue attempts went tragically wrong.

The three were declared dead when the hospital team finally admitted that attempts to resuscitate them had failed. They were Tracy Patterson, aged 11, of Hemsworth, West Yorkshire, who had fallen through an inch of ice into freezing water after chasing a dog, Jack Crawshaw, aged 51, of Wakefield, and off-duty fireman Michael Mee, aged 48. They were pulled from the water two hours after they fell in and taken to Pontefract general infirmary, West Yorkshire.

The head of accident and emergency at the hospital, consultant Mike Playforth, had initially been optimistic, saying extraordinary recoveries had taken place in drowning victims whose life systems were slowed but not extinguished by freezing temperatures.

Chief Inspector Michael Devlin of West Yorkshire police said that both men had been recommended for posthumous awards.

Tory MP faces £400,000 legal bill after libel defeat

Martin Linton

CONSERVATIVE MP David Ashby faces a legal bill estimated at £400,000 after losing his libel case last month over allegations in the Sunday Times that he is a homosexual. However, it seems unlikely he will cause John Major further trouble by being declared bankrupt and disqualified from the Commons.

No MP has been disqualified for bankruptcy since 1928. Lawyers believe that Mr Ashby, a barrister, will be able to agree repayment schedules and avoid eroding any further the Government's precarious majority.

Mr Ashby was given a warm welcome by fellow MPs as he took his seat for Prime Minister's questions three hours after his trial ended like the final act of a Greek tragedy, with husband and wife left crying on opposite sides of an empty courtroom.

The jury took five hours to reach a majority verdict in favour of the Sunday Times, who claimed that Mr Ashby was a homosexual and was having an affair with an Irish doctor, Ciaran Kilduff.

The newspaper's star witness was Mrs Ashby, who claimed her husband had confessed to her that he was a homosexual when they ended their 28-year-old marriage. She sounded less certain after the court case.

Asked if she was convinced her husband was a homosexual, she said: "I don't know. It was up to the jury." In a prepared statement she said: "It gives me no pleasure to see my husband lose an expensive libel action. I hope that it will not have a terrible effect on him."

She ended by quoting the proverb "least said, soonest mended" but agreed to give interviews on conditions laid down by Sunday Times lawyer Alastair Brett that she should get prior sight of what was intended to be published.

Her husband, the MP for Leicestershire North-West, looked stunned by the verdict. He took refuge in the Inner Temple, barring the way to journalists, and later issued a two-line statement through his solicitor.

His costs will not be known until the taxation proceedings are complete, which can take six to nine months, but lawyers put the cost of a four-week libel trial at £150,000 to £200,000 for each side.

The Sunday Times used its own legal department, which may reduce the costs, and Mr Brett said he was sure editor John Witherow would be sensible about recovering costs. "We will have to show magnanimity in victory."

Prisons 'must slash costs'

Alan Travis

THE new head of the Prison Service has told governors they must cut costs by 15 per cent over the next three years to close the gap with private prisons.

The disclosure came the day after an inspection team last month walked out of Holloway women's prison in north London because they were so appalled by the conditions. Their complaints included over-zealous security and prisoners being locked up for 23 hours a day.

The Prison Officers' Association warned the conditions would be repeated throughout the country unless budget cuts were halted.

Richard Tilt, the acting director general of the Prison Service, acknowledged there were likely to be other prisons which have such bad conditions that they will have to be baled out.

Janet King, the governor of Holloway jail, has been given the option of moving to another post within the Prison Service and will not face disciplinary action over the state of her prison. Home Office ministers have taken a "supportive attitude" towards the senior management of Britain's largest women's prison in the wake of the dramatic walkout by a team of government inspectors.

Holloway's grim story, page 25

In Brief

THE Government and medical establishment face pressure for clearer guidelines on patient consultation after a gynaecologist was cleared of illegally procuring an abortion on a woman who did not know she was pregnant.

BEEF sales dropped by 15 per cent in the four weeks to mid-December as 1.4 million households stopped buying beef as a result of fears that BSE might be transmitted to humans.

A GOVERNMENT inquiry cleared Monklands district council in Scotland of nepotism and political and religious bias in job appointments. The charges have dogged the Labour-controlled council for three years.

MOHAMMED Al-Fayed, the owner of Harrods, plans to set up his own newspaper after being thwarted in attempts to break into media ownership.

THE Millennium Commission threw out proposals for the £88 million Cardiff Bay Opera House as "too risky", provoking accusations of metropolitan snobbery and anti-Welsh bias.

ACCORDING to 1965 cabinet records, released this week, Harold Wilson was given a contemptuous brush-off by the US president, Lyndon Johnson, when he asked to have face to face consultations over Vietnam.

CHURCH leaders launched a swingeing attack on the National Lottery, describing this week's £33 million roll-over jackpot as "obscene".

THE Prime Minister signalled his intention to reform arcane property laws that enable "unscrupulous" landlords to exploit tenants by demanding unjustified service charges and unfairly wriggling out of having to sell their freeholds.

A TEENAGER who took part in the mugging and stabbing of the husband of the Director of Public Prosecutions was sentenced to six years' youth custody.

SHAHID IQBAL, aged 22, a supermarket worker from Birmingham, faced charges of 10 attempted murders after shoppers and staff were stabbed in a random knife attack.

THREE workmen were killed and four others critically injured when an explosion tore through an engineering yard on Tyneside during pressure-testing of an offshore rig.

POLICE are hunting an armed gang who shot dead one man and injured two others who intervened to prevent what appears to have been an attempted street robbery in the St Paul's area of Bristol.

Why I had to leave the Tories

Emma Nicholson, the defecting MP, explains why she felt betrayed and lost within her own party

IT HAS NOT been easy for me to leave the Conservative party. My father and uncles were Conservative MPs, and I have many friends and colleagues that I shall miss.

Yet I am quite clear that I have done the right thing, for myself, for my constituents and, above all, for the country in joining the Liberal Democrats. Far from being overwhelmed by natural regrets, I now look forward with a sense of positive hope for the future, and a feeling of political ease at being able to say exactly what I think.

Any personal decision of this magnitude involves both "push" and "pull" factors. The contemporary Conservative party is increasingly unattractive to someone like myself, who identified so strongly with the old "One Nation" tradition. There is an increasing venom in the internal faction-fighting within the party, and an endless search for scapegoats: single mothers, asylum seekers, young people, ethnic minorities and many others are used as political targets by ministers seeking to deflect blame.

Moreover, the Government seems to have lost all sense of positive direction at a crucial time for the future of Britain. This is particularly true of the vital question of the development of a modern democratic Europe with Britain "at its heart". How ironic those words of John Major's seem now in the light of the sorry saga of shilly-shallying on Europe that we have seen from the Government. I find that most of our continental European neighbours are in despair at the inability of the British government to rise above cheap flag-waving populism and get on with the real job of building the sort of Europe we want, including, in the not too distant future, complete economic and monetary union.

In a real sense, I feel that rather than my leaving the Conservative party of Winston Churchill, Harold Macmillan and Edward Heath, the modern harsh and uncaring Conservative party has left me.

Now as to the factors that have pulled me towards the Liberal Democrats: I am sure I am not alone in having Liberal as well as Conservative forebears — and I am clear that the Liberal Democrats have inherited that great liberal tradition of "conscience and reform". I have already mentioned Europe in which the Liberal Democrats have an impressive and absolutely consistent record of constructive engagement. But on other issues such as foreign affairs and international human rights, from Bosnia and the Middle East to Hong Kong, I have already found myself agreeing with Paddy Ashdown and his colleagues Menzies Campbell and David Steel.

And in Britain it is precisely the Liberal Democrats' mix of competitive free enterprise, long-term public investment, particularly in education, and social compassion that is a perfect fit for me.

I am convinced we need fundamental constitutional reform at all levels. We must cleanse the Augean stables at Westminster of the mess of patronage and special interests which do so much to discredit democracy. I was distressed at the Government's attitude to the Nolan report. Lobbying income must be declared. Quangos must be cleaned up. Parliament must work more openly and efficiently.

But the main thrust of reform must be to move power away from the centre and out to the localities of Britain, away from the state and towards the citizen and away from London to the nations and regions of Britain. I am convinced that the regeneration of our democracy depends upon empowering individuals, families and communities rather than attempting to put all power in the hands of the gentlemen of Whitehall and Westminster.

So I look to the future with the confidence of someone who believes that she can make a contribution of hope for the next century rather than being locked into the politics of the past. — *The Observer*

Emma Nicholson campaigning in the 1992 general elections

Comment, page 12

Privatised regulators may face scrutiny from Nolan

Patrick Wintour

LORD Nolan's committee on standards in public life may now look at the powerful new breed of industry regulators, including the lottery industry's Peter Davis, Lord Nolan indicated last week.

The committee, which has already prompted sweeping reforms of rules for MPs, is investigating accountability in local public spending bodies such as grant-maintained schools and housing associations. It is due to complete that report by Easter.

The growing calls for an inquiry into the independent regulators reached a new pitch after Mr Davis accepted free flights from a major backer of lottery operator Camelot, against advice from the National Heritage Department. Virginia Bottomley, the Heritage Secretary, resisted calls for his dismissal.

Asked on BBC radio whether his committee would investigate the regulators, Lord Nolan replied: "We very well may. I can certainly say this, that the regulators . . . are holders of public office and, therefore, quite within our terms of reference.

"The suggestion has been made over the current case that it would be sensible to see in more detail what regulates the regulators, and to whom they are accountable."

Lord Nolan also expressed surprise at the public's cynicism over standards in public life. His postbag was mainly filled with letters about financial greed, but also about sexual misbehaviour. Asked what people said, he replied: "That the country was going to the dogs."

Lord Nolan's office stressed that no final decision had yet been made. It would examine the rules governing the regulators of the privatised industry regulators such as Ofwat, Oftel and Ofgas.

Each regulator has enormous power to determine competition policy, but the degree of independence expected is not clearly defined in any overall code. "We may need to ask who regulates the regulators," a Nolan committee source said.

They all have sharply differing lines of accountability and are subject to differing degrees of scrutiny by Commons select committees.

The Nolan committee, set up by John Major to look into standards in public life, is due to run until October 1997. After the election, it is likely that many committee members will want to examine the financing of political parties.

● The National Lottery regulator, Mr Davis, last month announced an inquiry into bribery claims by Richard Branson, *writes Andrew Culf.*

Details of the inquiry were revealed as Mrs Bottomley was summoned to the Commons to answer questions about the conduct of Mr Davis, who accepted free flights from a Camelot shareholder, GTech.

The inquiry into claims by the Virgin Group chairman, Richard Branson, made on BBC's Panorama programme, that GTech's chairman, Guy Snowden, offered him a bribe to withdraw his lottery bid, is to begin this month, headed by Anne Rafferty QC, chairman of the Criminal Bar Association.

Mr Branson said the inquiry head should have been appointed independently of Oflot and the Heritage Department, and the review should be in public. It should also consider the procedures by which Mr Davis vetted GTech when choosing who should run the lottery.

"Unless the proposed inquiry has these safeguards and is able to search for the truth without constraint, then it would lack public confidence and credibility," he said in a letter to Mr Davis.

A spokesman for GTech said: "We are very happy about the inquiry. We have nothing to hide."

Church stirs asylum row

Madeleine Bunting and Patrick Wintour

AN OVERTLY political welfare initiative has been launched by churches to provide feeding centres, soup runs and hostels for thousands of refugees as the Government axes benefits to asylum seekers this year.

Churches and agencies believe they could face a humanitarian disaster of highly vulnerable people including children and the elderly who will find themselves without shelter in the middle of winter.

A nationwide aid network is being prepared, with church halls used as daytime shelters, soup kitchens and advice centres.

In a sharp implicit criticism of government policy, church leaders have written to leading denominations in London, calling for volunteers to provide a network of trained co-ordinators.

In one letter, sent shortly before Christmas, the Bishop of Southwark, the Rt Rev Roy Williamson, urged congregations to protest to their member of Parliament. Jonathan Lloyd, the Bishop of Southwark's social action officer, said the church was being forced to step into the breach: "If asylum seekers can't depend on the state to provide a safety net, then the church has to step in. Who else is there?"

The Bishop of Southwark said he had already heard of landlords and hostels rejecting refugees as tenants for fear that their housing benefit would be cut. The Government is proposing to remove all housing benefit and income support from all people who claim asylum after entering the UK, and from all people appealing against a decision to refuse asylum status.

● The Home Secretary, Michael Howard, is on a two-week tour of India and Pakistan to review the granting of visas and to explain his plans to cut the number of asylum seekers from the two countries. He will also offer help to reduce the heroin trade.

Home Office officials insisted he was not making his visit to justify the Asylum and Immigration Bill.

New Zealand woos teachers

NEW Zealand has begun an advertising campaign in Britain to woo back hundreds of expatriate teachers staffing British classrooms, *writes Donald MacLeod.*

Up to 1,000 New Zealanders are estimated to be in British schools, particularly in London, as a way of financing travel to Europe on their "OE" — overseas experience.

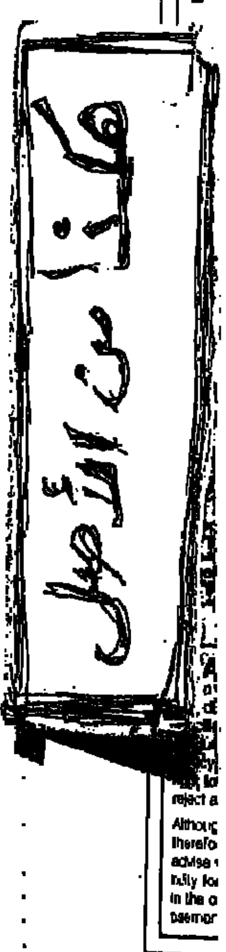
Now the Wellington government, which has enjoyed a surplus of teachers for years, is calling them home to fulfil its promise to reduce class sizes. Advertising in London and Strathclyde has been aimed at New Zealanders, although British teachers are also being recruited.

Rising numbers of primary schoolchildren and the New Zealand government's target limit of 25 to a class mean an extra 1,000 teachers will be needed next year.

With Britain's Teacher Training Agency expressing concern about recruitment, London schools are bracing themselves for a rerun of the shortage in the late eighties as the easing of the recession opens up alternative jobs.

During the last shortage, the British authorities targeted qualified New Zealanders and Australians, who were often working in bars or on building sites, and even advertised at the Munich beer festival.

Headteachers have called on the School Teachers' Review Body to make a pay award that would avert a recruitment crisis.



F07·22·12·95· *"Orff with her ring"* . AFTER TENNIEL – —©Steve Bell 1995—

Queen orders royal divorce

Guardian Reporters

THE QUEEN last month broke with royal protocol to disclose that she wished to see an "early divorce" between the Prince and Princess of Wales in a sensational announcement that capped a year that has arguably been more damaging for the monarchy than the *annus horribilis* of 1992.

Ending a month of speculation that began with the Princess of Wales's interview for Panorama on November 20, the Queen wrote a private letter to both the prince and princess expressing her anger and frustration at their continued public squabbling and demanding an immediate end to their marriage.

Buckingham Palace said that after considering the current turbulent situation "the Queen wrote to give her view that an early divorce is desirable". It added that the Queen was fully supported in her position by the Duke of Edinburgh.

It is understood that since the princess made her Panorama interview, the Prince of Wales has shared the view that an official termination of their relationship is desirable.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, was consulted before the letters were sent and agreed with their contents.

The Queen's outspoken comments pave the way for a divorce that could take place within a matter of weeks. Under normal divorce procedures, marriage terminations to which both parties agree take at least three months to fulfil, but this case is likely to be seen as an exceptional one for which procedures will be expedited.

The Queen's statement was doubly extraordinary because the protocol to which the palace adheres is that no comment is made on any matter impinging on the personal affairs of members of the royal family.

But the anger of the Queen has been widely known over the outspoken comments that the princess made to Panorama about her marriage and about the Prince of Wales prospects of becoming king. The princess cast doubt on his ability to cope with the stresses and tensions associated with occupying the throne.

In the Panorama interview, she said she did not want a divorce but had not discussed the matter with her husband. She added: "Obviously we need clarity on the situation".

The Princess did not spend Christmas Day with the royal family, in contradiction of an earlier announcement that she would be at Sandringham as usual.

● The Princess's ambition to become a "goodwill ambassador" for Britain hit an unexpected snag, when she became the target of angry protests on the Caribbean island where she was holidaying, *writes Sue Quinn.*

The self-styled Queen of Hearts infuriated residents of Barbuda, who rallied at their town hall to complain about the closure of a public beach, to which they had been forbidden access for the sake of her privacy.

Police and officers of the Antigua and Barbuda Defence Force are reported to have declared the white sands near the island's exclusive K-Club resort a VIP-only zone to protect the princess against intrusion by the prying lenses of a posse of press photographers.

"Our beaches are open, we are free to do what we want on them, so we're not at all happy about this," said one resident, Natalie Nedd.

Gulf war general accuses MoD of 'disgraceful' role

David Fairhall

DEMANDS for an inquiry were made this week after General Sir Peter de la Billière, Britain's Gulf war commander, accused the Ministry of Defence of "disgraceful interference" in his conduct of the campaign, and of causing deaths among RAF pilots by insisting on low-level bombing.

David Clark, the shadow defence secretary, said: "This inquiry must be top-level, urgent and penetrative. These comments give rise to grave alarm and despondency at the alleged role of the MoD."

In a forthcoming BBC television documentary on the fifth anniversary of the war, the general shows himself primarily concerned to avoid unnecessary casualties — even refusing a proposal from General Norman Schwarzkopf, the US overall commander, to attach Britain's 1st Armoured Division to the US Marines in a frontal assault on the Iraqis' main defences.

He insisted instead on an outflanking manoeuvre for which his tanks were better suited. He says he was also quick to suggest a change in RAF low-level bombing tactics when four Tornados were lost in as many days.

US aircraft bombed from medium altitude with few losses.

In the BBC series, the Gulf commander accuses "one particular senior officer in the MoD" of refusing to endorse a change of tactics because of its implications for the RAF's Nato strategy. Sir Peter regarded this as disgraceful interference in what should have been the prerogative of the local commander.

The RAF did switch to medium-level laser-guided bombing. But not in time to prevent the captured crew of a Tornado being dragged before Iraqi TV cameras. That humiliation struck deep. Its effects have resurfaced four years on in a £650 million RAF programme to develop a new ground-attack weapon known as Casom (Conventionally Armed Stand-off Missile).

The operational requirement specifies that aircraft like the Tornado, the Harrier and the Eurofighter 2000, must be able to launch the missile at an enemy airfield from at least 125 miles. Seven firms are bidding for the contract.

In the series, Lady Thatcher says that had she still been prime minister, she would have urged the US president to press on to Baghdad.

During the surrender negotiations at Safwan, in southern Iraq, I asked General de la Billière why the allies stopped short of pursuing the Iraqis, either north towards Baghdad or eastwards into Basra.

He replied that strategic factors apart, allied troops had lost their appetite for shooting a retreating enemy in the back.

Link in student murder hunt

Alex Bellos

DETECTIVES investigating the death of Celine Figard, a French hitchhiker found murdered in a Worcestershire lay-by, are considering possible links with previous killings.

The 19-year-old accountancy student's naked body was found last week, 10 days after she was last seen accepting a lift from a lorry driver at a service station near Newbury, Berkshire.

Chief Superintendent John McCammont of West Mercia police, who is leading the inquiry, said: "There are several cases around the country where naked women have been found adjacent to major roads with similar injuries. We are in contact with other forces. There is one case in particular — that of Tracy Turner — where the victim was picked up at a service station, that we will be looking at."

Ms Turner, aged 32, was last seen alive at a service station on the M6 in Staffordshire in March 1994. Her naked body was found in a ditch near Bitteswell, Leicestershire.

Celine was travelling from France to visit her cousin, who works as a head waiter at a hotel in the New Forest. The investigation, using 88 officers from three forces, has still failed to trace the ginger-haired driver who gave Celine a lift in his white Mercedes lorry at Chieveley service station on the M4.

A police spokesman said there were 1,200 similar lorries registered across the country but he was confident the driver would be found. "Whether or not he is Celine's killer is another matter."

Concern about nine similar murders in the Midlands over the past few years led to officers meeting early last year to discuss the possibility of a connection. Detectives admitted there were similarities, but subsequently dismissed any formal links.

Lottery comes up to scratch in an instant

John Ezard

THE WORDS "instant", "scratchcard" and "rollover" are to go into new editions of the three main dictionaries — Oxford, Collins and Chambers — it was announced last week.

The National Lottery organisers, Camelot, rejoiced at how quickly they had become a national institution. Yet they are still dwarfed in popularity by other more caustic buzz-words and phrases of life in the mid-1990s.

The runaway winner was "sleaze" — even more favoured as a term about politics in 1995 than it was in 1994, when the MPs' cash-for-questions row began.

Some phrases have kept a currency which began earlier in the decade — reflecting how little the British economy has changed in the 1990s. But "road rage" and "spin doctor" have come virtually out of nowhere to high places in the list, which is compiled from the Financial Times' electronic Profile database. It holds the text of all British broadsheet newspapers and some tabloids as far back as 1982.

Partly thanks to the Nolan inquiry, "sleaze" cropped up around 5,400 times last year, 30 per cent more often than in 1994. Second favourite, with nearly 3,000 entries, was the environment cliché "sustainable", made fashionable by the 1992 Earth Summit.

Next were "negative equity" (1,503 entries, more than in 1993 or 1994), "information superhighway", a noun virtually non-existent two years ago (1,450 entries), "feisty" (761), "road rage" (486), "defining moment" (417) and "spin doctor" (412). "Scratchcard" (401) was ninth, followed by "mindset" (261), with "rollover" (255) eleventh. "Instant" is too common a word to single out from the database.

Among other terms coming up on the inside track as possible favourites for this year are "on the cusp" (235), "gangsta" (210), and "jungle music" (58).

One curious coinage, "epiphany", was published 187 times. The novelist James Joyce adapted this Christian word in 1916 to mean "a sudden spiritual manifestation . . . the most delicate and evanescent of moments". Now it is most commonly used to indicate "I quite enjoyed that film/pop record/soap opera". But the word-of-mouth fashion for other recent phrases from TV or royal soap operas such as "I'll always be there for you" or "There were three of us in this marriage", is unsearchable by computer.

Judges review right to die

THE first right-to-die case in Scotland is to be considered by the country's three senior judges because of the importance of the legal issues it raises.

Lord Cameron of Loch Broom told the Court of Session in Edinburgh last month that he would not be issuing a judgment, after nearly 3 days of evidence and legal argument. Instead he is to make a report for the Inner House of senior judges to consider.

It means a delay in any decision on Janet Johnstone, who has been in a coma for nearly four years.

Law Hospital NHS trust in Lanarkshire is seeking a declaration that it would be lawful for it to stop artificially feeding Mrs Johnstone, aged 52, who doctors say is in a vegetative state with no hope of recovery.

The Lord Advocate, Lord Mackay of Drumadoon, said it was not his intention to frustrate the doctors, but he had to ensure that it was legally competent. This was only fair to doctors and relatives of the patient.

If the court could not grant permission in a case like that, then it was a matter for Parliament. Scotland was now out of step with England, where the House of Lords had ruled on the case of the Hillsborough victim Tony Bland, Lord Mackay said.

A year ago the miners bought Tower Colliery in South Wales. They were told it was unviable. Now it's in profit. **John Mullin** celebrates the pit that wouldn't close

A shaft of light in a dying valley

WARM and bright they glowed in the cold South Wales night, cheery Christmas bulbs on top of the pit-head. The workers used to be refused permission to put them up. But that was back then, and the men and women of Tower Colliery no longer need heed bosses' humbug.

In the pubs and workers' clubs of Hirwaun and Aberdare, the miners of Tower were heaving back the drink. They were celebrating the festive season and the most astonishing year in the long history of the last deep mine in South Wales.

They own the mine now, and equally. They did what they were told was impossible: to post a profit. This year they will announce pre-tax profits of £2.1 million on £15.7 million turnover. There are 246 of them. Each is worker and capitalist, at the only coal pit in the world of its type. Once they were informed their dream could never be achieved. Michael Heseltine, the then Industry Secretary, and British Coal, called the pit "unviable". There were problems with seismic surveys, they were told.

None had a degree in geology, it was true. But they knew their mine. Many had worked at the coal-face for 30 years and more. There was, they knew, no doubt of its potential. The politicians and managers changed tack. There was, the miners were informed, no market for the anthracite they produced. It might be the finest of all coals, but who, they were asked with patronising rhetoric, would want to buy it these days?

And so Tower, the last in a region which once employed 270,000, was to be consigned to the history books. The colliery closed in April 1994. British Coal executives, after months of shifting goalposts, and shenanigans too depressing to detail, signed the pit's death warrant. But the miners thought they could see the hand of government pulling at the puppet strings. Never mind that the workers had met increasingly fraught output targets. Or that they had earned profits of £28 million in three years.

It was a decision which had Tyrone O'Sullivan, aged 50, in tears. He had been National Union of Mineworkers' lodge secretary for 22 years, and he was driving back after the last meeting with British Coal. He was required to sign those forms, but refused. An NUM official for South Wales filled in for him. "It broke my heart that night. Twenty-eight years I had been at this pit."

There were five members of the Tower Lodge at the meeting in Newport. They were summoned there immediately after the workers voted to close the pit following threats from British Coal to cut redundancy terms. They decided on a consolation drink as they returned home. They nipped into the Full Moon in Aberman.

"We had a few drinks, and then we phoned our families and got them down." It was then that the Tower miners hatched the plan which would provide a new beginning. And so they set to work, bringing an estimated £10 million to the devastated Cynon Valley. Male unemployment is around one in three. Wage rates are horrendously depressed: the job centre in Aberdare advertised recently for a security guard at an hourly rate of £1.50 ($2.30). And any applicant had to supply his own dog.

To succeed in its task the NUM lodge would have to count on the strong spirit of the Tower workforce: Tower had long had a reputation as staunchly socialist — indeed many around here believe that is why the authorities are so keen to close it down. It was a citadel for workers' solidarity. Its miners took part in the Merthyr riots of 1831, the first to fly the red flag. No one is quite sure if it was a cow, sheep or goat that was sacrificed to dye a white sheet.

The miners remember with awe how William Richards, then the leading union official at the pit, went to fight in the Spanish Civil War. He died in 1936. Death was never far away: asking around the Penywaun social club and every fourth bingo player had lost a father, an uncle or a grandfather. One dreadful day in October 1962 nine men were killed in an explosion.

O'Sullivan has seen 14 men die within arm's length. His father was killed in June 1963 in a roof collapse. His great grandfather and two great uncles died on the same day in 1886.

The deaths, the banter, and the political history all shaped Tower. Its own nickname is Little Moscow. O'Sullivan, drawing from US journalist John Reed's account of that turning point in history, called his diary of the demise of Tower in its previous incarnation: Fourteen Days That Shook The World. He knew his plan for a workers' buy-out could only succeed if they stuck together. He never doubted they would.



All work and real pay . . . Tower installation deputy Brian Lundregan does his paperwork at the end of a shift while, below, miners wait at the pithead for their shift to begin

PHOTOGRAPHS: JEFF MORGAN

The first step was to ask each of those interested to stump up £2,000 from their redundancy payments, which averaged about £18,000. A bank account was set up four days later, with £364,000. Glyn Roberts, a fourth-generation miner, recalls having £30,000 under his bed.

The team of five NUM lodge officials took advice from Fairwater Consultants, set up by the Welsh TUC to aid worker participation in buy-outs; then they did something deft: they asked Price Waterhouse, the accountants who had sequestrated NUM funds during the strike, to act for them. O'Sullivan admits it was a mischievous stroke. But it was also done because the miners knew the outfit had strong ties to the Government.

They drew up a business plan, and appointed a management team. They concentrated on respected figures. The coup was to secure Philip Weeks, former director of the National Coal Board in South Wales, as chairman. (He had resigned in protest at Ian McGregor's closure programme after the miners' strike a decade ago.) Weeks was delighted to help out. Next came what Heseltine suggested would be tricky: to secure buyers for the coal. They estimated they would produce 395,000 tons a year.

Provisional contracts for up to five years were drawn up, and after production began, another was signed with British Steel, the first time that organisation has brought any British coal in 10 years.

But there was, again contrary to Heseltine's predictions, no shortage of private companies prepared to give Tower a go. At one point a dozen firms were preparing bids. Tower Employee Buy-Out (Tebo) strengthened its hand by going back to its shareholders, the workforce. They were each asked for a further £6,000, and virtually everybody paid up.

O'Sullivan, who worked 16-hour days to put the deal together, was at an NUM meeting in Barnsley when news came through that Tebo had been confirmed as preferred bidder. "I had to get back. I knew I wouldn't make it to the pub, but I just wanted home. I drove all the way in the inside lane. I was saying to myself: 'Now Ty, don't die tonight.' I walked into the house in darkness. But everyone was waiting up for me after the pub. It was a lovely moment."

The sale was completed on December 23, 1994. O'Sullivan sat signing documents for three hours. The last was to confirm the change in ownership of 200 pairs of Wellington boots. And then he handed over a cheque for £1 million.

Tebo formally took control at one minute past midnight on Christmas Eve. The team went up to the pit, whisky bottles in hand. It was a cold and frosty night, but clear. They had a party in the yard, and toasted the future.

None had any doubt that they could make it work, but they have exceeded expectations. Miners say morale has never been higher. Pit deputy Brian Lundregan, aged 38, said there is much less wastage: "Everyone knows that if something is saved it's more for us, our families and the community. There is none of the reluctance there used to be when the boys were asked to do something.

"It really is a fantastic pit. I was away from it for 20 months, and it was the worst time of my life. I love the camaraderie."

The miners are paid up to £403 a week, depending on the job. The basic is higher than in the old days, though there is less scope for overtime. Each worker this year received a £500 payment out of profits.

The management system is different, too. Workers are consulted about all decisions. Ann Clwyd, MP for Cynon Valley, who stayed down the pit for 27 hours in April 1994 without food or water in an attempt to persuade British Coal to keep it open, said the miners' victory had electrified one of the UK's most deprived areas. "This is the first time we have had what we regard as a victory over the Government in all these years. It has given us both hope and belief."

It has given a similar boost to people throughout the country, says O'Sullivan, who presented President Clinton with a Tower Colliery tie when he met him at an international union meeting in New York last month. His office is festooned with cards. One, from Felicity Smith, of Stroud, Gloucestershire, reads: "It just goes to show what courage and determination can achieve."

There is also a copy of the 10 socialist commandments on his wall. Number Eight reads: "Observe and think in order to discover the truth. Do not believe what is contrary to reason, and never deceive yourself or others." It can be regarded as the miners' guiding principle — but there is an irony. O'Sullivan, now personnel director, said: "What I hate about this is that we have given privatisation of coal a friendly face and good name. Never mind that 100,000 miners have lost their jobs. That really narks me."

The miners say that Tower has a long-term future. A new seam opens in April and plans are in place for another. The team wants to maximise jobs, not profits. They say they have never been opposed to profits. "It's just what you do with them," Roberts said.

Putting country before party

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH. The Government should call an immediate general election to restore proper governance to a country that has suffered enough from the death pangs of the Conservative party. Emma Nicholson's decision to join the Liberal Democrats — the second Tory defection in three months — is likely to reduce the Government's majority to only one after two pending byelections. Pro-European Tory MP Hugh Dykes warns that six or seven more defections are possible unless the Government returns to moderate policies. The loss of Emma Nicholson will leave the Government ever more dependent on the Ulster Unionists whose continued loyalty, as they made clear, comes with a strict price tag. The Conservatives could pretty soon find themselves running a minority government trying to implement legislation that hardly anyone wants while responding to the bleatings of a minority of disaffected rightwing MPs whose views are unrepresentative of the electorate at large. It is not impossible to run a successful minority government. Some people still look back to the Lib-Lab pact of the late seventies as a watershed of sensible policies. But the conditions of consensual policies which existed then certainly don't exist now. Where is the support for privatisation of the railways or nuclear power, for the asylum bill, for the squeeze on one-parent familes, for the one-eyed determination to cut essential public spending to generate pre-electoral tax cuts that few people admit to wanting?

In his New Year message John Major said that Great Britain needed and deserved a government that could lead from experience as well as conviction and which would continue to steer the economy with skill. "Only the Conservatives can do that," he added. What piffle. Even long-standing Conservatives — of which Ms Nicholson and Alan Howarth are the tip of an iceberg — no longer believe it. Can even Mr Major himself believe, deep down, that the party which twice in a decade steered the British economy into unnecessarily deep recession and which blew the housing market apart in the late eighties, did so with "skill"? Even the modest recovery we are now enjoying owes much more to the failure of a seminal government policy — the dogged determination to maintain an overvalued currency until it fell apart in September 1992 — than to any skills. Last year Mr Major did a courageous thing. He laid his leadership of the Conservative party on the line, daring anyone to put up or shut up, to clear the air. That has patently failed. His beloved party is disintegrating before his eyes, unable to hold itself together even though an election is looming. The maximum period of 14 or 15 months between now and the next election is a long time for a country to be ruled by a party which has lost the will — and the ability — to govern in the interests of everyone. It is time for Mr Major to put the interests of the country above those of his party.

Mean cuts to World Service

THE GOVERNMENT'S plan to cut back heavily the BBC World Service is at best ill-advised and at worst vindictive. Britain has few organisations deemed to be world leaders but the World Service is one of them. It broadcasts in 41 languages to 133 million listeners — more than any other international broadcaster — and is respected as a role model everywhere. It is thus uniquely placed for further growth as the world media revolution unfolds. The Government ought to be *expanding* its operations, not cutting them. If the World Service were in the private rather than the public sector it would be feted as a huge success which the Foreign Office would break its back to promote. But because it is in the public sector, where success is often met with resentment, the opposite is happening. Even before the latest round of cuts it had to reduce its budget by 8 per cent in real terms over three years as a result of earlier ministerial decisions. These cuts would have been even worse but for an early day motion in Parliament in 1993 which attracted 408 cross-party signatories, the third largest on record.

Now the World Service faces two further swings of the axe. The first is a 20 per cent capital cut (£5.4 million) this year. This is not only stupid but unethical since the agreed three years are not yet up. The effect won't be catastrophic but it does mean that the BBC will be forced to borrow much more expensively from the private sector to make good the shortfall. The crunch comes in 1997/98 when the World Service's £135 million budget will be savaged by £10 million (from operating cuts, inflation and the effects of private financing) even before it has opened talks on its next three-year deal. This will inevitably mean cuts in services unless the Government climbs down. There will almost certainly be another early day motion attracting cross-party opposition to the cuts but it won't be binding. A large number of Conservatives oppose the cuts but not strongly enough to bring down the Government. But if Labour tabled a carefully targeted amendment aimed at doing nothing more than reversing the cuts it would almost certainly be carried on a wave of Tory support. One thing which won't be a problem is finding the money to make up the shortfall. This could be extracted with ease from a 10 per cent cut in the FO's £130 million-a-year entertainment budget. The FO is responsible for the World Service — subject to editorial freedom — and if it can't stand up for its ward, then it should sacrifice a few gin and tonics.

It is the World Service's misfortune that, like blood, Britain gives it away free. Or does it? We will never know, because we can't quantify how much the programmes foster a favourable climate for British culture translatable into visits to Britain, political harmony, and the purchase of British exports. The English language is Britain's priceless asset and this is one of the best conduits to exploit it. A government which can't see that is either deeply prejudiced or blind. Or both.

European bus hits the kerb

Jan. 7, 96 CW

TWO BUSES left from Turkey on Christmas Eve — we have it on the authority of Prime Minister Tansu Ciller herself. One was heading "for the past", the other "for Europe". Unfortunately, the Welfare Party's bus, with Islamic values and social justice on its destination board, has now gained the psychological edge by outpacing both Ms Ciller's True Path Party and its centre-right rival, the Motherland Party. The name of the game now changes from beating the fundamentalists at the polls to keeping them out of office. It has been played with singular lack of success elsewhere along the Mediterranean. Turkey may be different, but it is still a dodgy course.

The Welfare Party, under its leader Necmettin Erbakan, does advocate a semi-detached policy from the West and closer ties between Turkey and the Arab and Islamic worlds. Welfare invokes the grandeur of the Ottoman Empire as much as the glory of Islam. But the social basis for the party's support is rooted in its control since last year of 21 municipalities. Welfare has won support among the urban poor. Cheap bread and fuel are as much a part of its message as the Koran.

Ankara waged a successful campaign within the EU to secure Turkey's long-delayed entry into the customs union, but this does not appear to have had the magical effect on the electorate for which Ms Ciller had hoped. Europeanisation is a double-edged weapon for a country which will always be located in a geopolitical borderland. Cold war thinking insisted that Turkey be part of the West though it also faces East. This persists in the new version of cold war thinking built around the "Islamic threat". It would be more sensible to view Turkey as an intermediate state whose alignment may not always be precisely or permanently defined. It can create openings into Central Asia and links with its neighbours (not just Iran) which have their own value. For what it's worth, when Mr Erbakan visited the US a year ago, he made some effort to inform US officials that Turkey would never become another Algeria. He has also denied any intention of seeking to break with Europe.

Ms Ciller's image as a modern, secular, liberal alternative to the Welfare Party has some appeal but it is flawed by two large blemishes. One is the abuse of human rights in the war against Kurdish separatism, in spite of a few recent gestures. The other is the taint of government corruption which — in the manipulation of the land law for speculative benefit — has come uncomfortably close to home. With this luggage being carried on the European bus, no wonder that it hit the kerb.

Peace and goodwill, but not yet in Ireland

Hugo Young

AS A YEAR of peace, 1995 had its moments. Some theatres of death — Algeria, Chechenia, Rwanda — are soaked in the blood of many more innocents than when the cold war imposed a curfew on tribal slaughter. But some historic struggles have succumbed to a version of peace after years of terror. In Britain, it has been a big, unforgettable year. The Great Power has exercised its responsibilities. Bosnia, the Middle East, Ireland: Bill Clinton could yet be re-elected as a global hero.

Ireland is especially proud to be counted. For Clinton, the Irish-American voter plays roughly the part oil did for George Bush when he took America into the Gulf war: a commodity he knew he could not do without. If a permanent peace comes to Ireland Clinton will deserve some credit. But that's not the main message from 1995. Never has the Irish question seemed so utterly undeserving of the massive international attention bestowed on it.

The Middle East peace, if it progresses, will have settled a dispute of impenetrable complexity, reaching through territory, ethnicity, religion and military power. Acts of selfless magnanimity have been required to start the process, continue it despite assassination and permanent simmering rebellion, and persist with a strategy of sacrifice for the sake of a greater good for the greatest number.

The Bosnian deal, if it survives, engages Nato to police a peace that doesn't yet exist. The history of a country is being unpicked, its multi-racial tradition defined as no longer tenable. This truly qualifies as tragedy. The mismatch between territory and nation, through a thousand villages in choppy valleys and hillsides, is not capable of *solution*.

Set beside these ramifying crises, Ireland's problem seems merely squalid: a tribute to the historic incompetence of politicians. The emperor of Ulster turns out to have few clothes.

Ireland, of course, has a history. In the continuity of peacelessness, neither Palestine nor Bosnia can claim quite such a record over so many righteous centuries. And the world has been blackmailed into giving this history the same respect which Irish politicians believe it deserves.

But the Irish question has, in truth, neither much dignity nor much complexity. It is not about great issues but small, incorrigible hatreds. Once elevated as a religious question, it has lost its claim to this halo of sanctity, since religion, even in Ireland, has become for most people a matter of pretext not essence. As the south shakes off its clericalism, the Beast of Rome becomes more plainly a figment of Dr Paisley's crazed manipulations. As God gives way to Mammon, the argument is exposed as almost wholly self-indulgent: a make-work scheme for cadres of gangsters, politicians who would have no function if it was taken away.

Nor is the question any longer imbued with intrinsic necessity. There was a time when Protestant bigotry imposed itself outrageously on the lives of northern Catholics. But the transformation of that position is the one real gain from the history of the last 25 years. Even Adams and McGuinness fall back on historic injustices rather than present ones as the moral basis of their case. There is no suppression of religion, of tribe, of political rights.

Nor does Ireland have any importance beyond its own shores. This is not a struggle that could blow up the world, or destroy Europe. Mercifully, though the bombs used to get here and may do so again, the political and cultural argument doesn't even reach across the Irish Sea. Ireland has never politicised Britain, a fact that has helped prolong the Irish problem's unbreakable resilience. It is a static contest, between the political leaders of people who are threatened with neither ethnic cleansing nor territorial disturbance, whose dispute has few complexities beyond its waning historic residue, yet who require the world community to come and solve their problem — if, that is, they really want it to be solved. For where would Ireland be, in the recognition of the world, if it were nothing more than a small island off the offshore island off the mainland of Europe?

WHAT COATS the entire Irish problem — its most pitiful, and in the end contemptible, difference from both the Middle East and former Yugoslavia — is a generalised refusal to compromise. Somehow the Irish problem, though now wholly artificial, is sequestered by bigots from solution, whereas both Bosnia and Israel, beset by the most painfully real crises history could construct, has elicited a generosity in the cause of statesmanship that will make 1995 a year not to forget.

"I feel like a man who is drinking a bitter but useful medicine," said Alija Izetbegovic, president of Bosnia, when he signed the Dayton accord. "But I can assure you we are signing this peace treaty with sincerity." Prime Minister Rabin, before he gave his life, attested to the necessity of sacrifice for peace and committed himself to the immense task of persuading his people that they should actually give up land.

In Ireland such words and actions from any of the main protagonists seem unimaginable. Even the IRA ceasefire must not be graced with that name, may only be termed cessation lest anything so definitive as a concession is mistaken to have occurred. As for the Unionists, no concession of any kind can be contemplated before they sit around a table. Yet the draught they might sample, merely that of dialogue, isn't half so bitter as Izetbegovic's.

A critical mass of realism needs to be assembled behind the Irish question. These grizzled worshippers of ancient history must recognise that their causes have become futile. It may be too much to expect the gang-leaders and pseudo-religious zealots who masquerade as political leaders, and are quite happy to keep the Ulster imbroglio going in perpetuity, to change their habits overnight. In Bosnia and the Middle East, something large is happening for the world. In Ireland, how much longer will the world continue to be the life-support system for political incompetence?

South-east Asia caught up in arms race

Jean-Claude Pomonti in Bangkok

THE imponderables resulting from the end of the cold war, coinciding with an economic boom, have triggered an arms race in south-east Asia. While the risk of local conflicts breaking out has been substantially reduced by the efforts of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (Asean), Beijing's increasing recourse to strong-arm tactics, particularly in the past four years, is beginning to cause alarm in some countries in the region, where Chinese minorities play a crucial economic role.

The fact that China recently rearmed the Burmese army at a cost of $1-2 billion is regarded as an ill omen for the region, particularly as the United States, which no longer has any permanent military presence in that part of the world, does not seem keen to get involved in any regional conflict.

That consideration, coming on top of China's series of military manoeuvres off Taiwan and its determination to bring Hong Kong to heel in mid-1997, has given added impetus to the arms race.

Potentially the most dangerous source of tension in south-east Asia could come from sovereignty claims over the South China Sea. The Chinese occupy the northern archipelago of the Paracel Islands, from which they dislodged a South Vietnamese garrison in 1974, and to which Hanoi now lays claim. They are thought to have built an airstrip on it for fighter-bombers some years ago. Five countries (Malaysia, the Philippines, Vietnam, China and Taiwan) have troops stationed on the southern archipelago of the Paracel Islands.

The small sultanate of Brunei, on the northwest tip of the island of Borneo, lays claim to some of the Spratly Islands, although it has no presence there.

Bones of contention, and in particular border disputes, abound in the Indochinese peninsula and south-east Asia, which comprise 10 countries and half a billion inhabitants. It is a region where maritime borders often overlap.

Cambodia, for example, is in dispute with its two larger neighbours, Thailand and Vietnam. It accuses them of having shifted border markers. In 1995 serious clashes, which resulted in several people being killed, took place between Thais and Burmese, who both lay claim to the rich fish stocks of the Andaman Sea.

The fact that Asean includes seven states in the region and will shortly offer membership to the remaining three (Cambodia and Laos in 1997 or 1998, and Burma probably by 2000) is the main reason why the situation has remained relatively calm.

Early in December, talks between the government of the Philippines and Muslim separatists in the south of the archipelago, which resulted in a provisional agreement, were held in Djakarta under the patronage of the Indonesian government.

The storm of protest triggered off in the Philippines last year when a Filipino national was hanged for murder in Singapore has also died down, since good neighbourliness between Asean countries is regarded as more important than any other consideration.

Malaysia and Thailand have set a good example: they now jointly fish in a once disputed maritime zone in the Gulf of Thailand.

Asean could also eventually provide a useful structure when it comes to solving the problems that will inevitably be caused by a mounting influx of immigrants. Hundreds of thousands of Sumatrans, whose standard of living is low, have illegally entered peninsular Malaysia, which suffers from a labour shortage. Thailand has experienced an equally large influx of Burmese immigrants, who have left their country for economic or political reasons, and who offer a source of cheap labour.

But Asean will find it harder to achieve a *modus vivendi* in the South China Sea in the face of mounting Chinese nationalism, which has been boosted by an extremely favourable balance of power. Several round-table discussions organised by Indonesia and the Philippines have failed to solve the problem: Beijing is in no mood to review the "indisputability" of its sovereignty over the sea, as "confirmed" by a decision of the Chinese parliament in February 1992.

Beijing is prepared to have talks, but not to negotiate, with Asean. As regards countries bordering on the South China Sea, it will agree only to bilateral negotiations with them — and even then only on condition that the issue under discussion is the joint exploitation of the zone, and not sovereignty.

Meanwhile, the Chinese have reinforced their military presence in the two archipelagos — and have even ceded to an American oil company an oil concession located on the Vietnamese continental shelf southeast of Ho Chi Minh City.

China has also indicated that it will not recognise an Asean-sponsored treaty signed in mid-December, which is intended to turn south-east Asia into a nuclear-weapons-free zone, just as long as the South China Sea is not specifically excluded from the zone in question.

It goes without saying that if the leaders of the countries of south-east Asia are busy arming themselves it is because they are already thinking of their future relations with China — though they are careful not to say so too explicitly.

(December 27)

Juppé still has a hard road ahead

EDITORIAL



Is that it then? Can I go and do my shopping?

THE round-table talks which French prime minister Alain Juppé convened on December 21, after three weeks of nationwide strikes, lasted all of 10 hours, yet not much headway was made. Jean Gandois, head of the French employers' council, who had had to fight hard within his organisation to win agreement for his decision to take part in Juppé's "social summit", summed up its result rather aptly: "It's going to be a poor man's Christmas."

It is true that the outlook is bleak for wage-earners and old-age pensioners, who will bear the brunt of a fresh series of social security deductions as 1996 starts. Things look equally bleak for the government: not only are its coffers empty, but it already realises that the slowdown in growth will result in lower tax revenues and social security contributions in 1996. It is consequently being cautious about handing out the kind of incentives that are likely to stimulate economic activity.

It has also been a disappointing result for those who believe in social dialogue: all that grew out of an exceptionally powerful protest movement, which was remarkable more for the huge demonstrations it was able to muster than for the strike action it inspired, was a charade which left the sceptics still sceptical, the disgruntled still disgruntled and the optimists trying to put the best possible gloss on their voluntarism.

If the industrial action which brought public transport to a standstill for three weeks was essentially a protest against Juppé's plans to reform the social security system, then the social summit produced nothing, since concessions — over special pension rights, for example — had already been made.

There is no denying that the social lines of communication have been restored. But then industrial relations in a country as modern as France must have reached a sorry pass for such a fuss to be made about the mere fact that a prime minister was meeting representatives of labour and management.

It is of course a good thing that both sides have been talking to each other once again. But we are still a long way from any veritable national pact — to encourage employment and fight social exclusion — of the kind that some of our European neighbours alone seem capable of devising.

As was the case with the Grenelle talks [which ended the industrial and student unrest of May 1968], none of the conclusions of December 21's social summit was signed by any representative of the trade unions or employers' council.

The statement read out by Juppé, with its promises of negotiations and intermediate review processes, sounded more like a roll-call of good intentions than a summing up of the talks just concluded. When he referred to the "joint determination" of the government and representatives of labour and management "to make employment their absolute priority", he was really speaking only on behalf of the government.

Since the leaders of the two most militant unions, Marc Blondel of Force Ouvrière and Louis Viannet of the CGT, were left empty-handed at the end of the December 21 talks, the fear must be that Juppé's social summit did nothing to lessen the degree of industrial unrest revealed over the previous three weeks.

Once the political truce that is traditionally observed over Christmas and the New Year has expired, further industrial action remains a real risk, with, lurking in the background, the threat of a yet greater slump in economic activity.

(December 23)

Mother cast in role of untouchable

Bruno Philip in New Delhi

IN A speech she made on November 18 at New Delhi's Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Mother Teresa urged the people of "this beautiful country" to remain "united and at peace".

It was uncontentious stuff, though her presence in that particular context was less so: the prayer meeting in fact marked the high point of a campaign organised by the Catholic clergy in favour of Christian untouchables.

Down the centuries, a number of untouchables became Christians — and indeed Buddhists or Muslims — to escape the ruthless caste system imposed by Hinduism.

But that did not mean they were able to shake off the "trappings" of their caste, since high-caste converts, while still calling themselves Christians, continued to treat them like the untouchables that they or their forebears used to be. As a result, when low- or high-caste Catholics go to church to pray — and this is especially true of southern India — they sit in separate pews.

Zealots belonging to fundamentalist Hindu organisations were quick to interpret Mother Teresa's participation in the Delhi prayer meeting as proof of her political commitment.

Sushma Swaraj, a spokesman for the powerful Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party, claimed that Mother Teresa wanted to introduce the notion of untouchability into a religion which was not supposed to recognise the caste system. The introduction of a statutory quota system in churches of the kind enjoyed by untouchables in the civil service, would not, he said, serve the interests of Christianity.

But the controversy did not end there. In the event, Mother Teresa lost out on every count: as soon as she got back to Calcutta, she called a press conference and stated that she had never intended to get involved in a debate of that kind. She said she had been misinformed about the purpose of the prayer meeting.

Her remarks were not at all to the liking of the New Delhi archbishop's office and Christian activists. Father Lourduswamy, general secretary of the Coordination Committee for Indian Untouchables, said he was surprised that the Nobel prizewinner could have got things so wrong: "A written invitation was sent to her, explaining that the purpose of the prayer meeting was to demand greater justice for low-caste Catholics."

Another Catholic priest, Father Soman Das, quoted by the weekly magazine Sunday, wondered whether Mother Teresa was suffering from amnesia. He went on to argue that she had been silly to recant, and that anyway her views on abortion and family planning proved she was out of touch.

Such remarks are most unusual coming from a Catholic priest. But they show, the magazine argues, that Mother Teresa is now probably more unpopular with the Indian clergy than she is with Hi[illegible] extremists.

(December 26)

Apocalyptic vision results in tragedy

Henri Tincq traces the origins of the Order of the Solar Temple after last month's apparent second suicide ritual involving 16 of its members and, below, looks at the difficulty of legislating to control sects

IF THE lives of those who belonged to the Order of the Solar Temple were no more than a "performance", then clearly their deaths had to be too. Interestingly, they were not in the habit of referring to death as death, but preferred to call it a "great journey" or "a transit", convinced as they were that they belonged to a select élite — the "Great White Lodge" — that was destined to break away from the hateful modern world and attain, in the great invisible, higher states of consciousness. A recurring theme in their speeches and thoughts was the imminence of "the Apocalypse".

The Order of the Solar Temple has connections with New Age philosophy, and advocates practices based on natural medicine, strict rules governing diet and hygiene, yoga and ecology (biological farms), all of which are seen as ways of surviving until "the Apocalypse" occurs.

In the early eighties Luc Jouret, a Belgian homoeopathic doctor practising in Annemasse, in the Haute-Savoie *département*, tried to seize control of what was then known as the Reformed Order of the Temple, following the death of its "grand master", José Origas. Jouret had given up traditional medicine and spent all his time travelling and visiting healers, even as far afield as the Philippines.

In his quest for what he described as "a synthesis capable of caring for man in his totality", which would combine the therapeutic (the doctor) with the sacerdotal (the priest), Jouret had attempted in various ways to renew the legendary Order of the Temple, whose grand master Jacques de Molay had been burnt at the stake in 1814 at the behest of Philip the Fair.

In 1984, Jouret broke with the Reformed Order of the Temple and founded the Knightly International order of the Solar Tradition. He also ran societies with names like Archedia or Amenta, and travelled widely in Switzerland, France and Canada giving lectures and seminars.

Jouret, who was young (he was born in 1947) and smooth-talking, mesmerised audiences with his scientific and medical knowledge and his grasp of traditional forms of wisdom. He built up a band of faithful followers who went to listen to him in Geneva, Lausanne and the South of France. They consisted mainly of affluent technicians, doctors and people working in the arts. A majority of them were women.

Jouret tried out his favourite themes, such as the imminent and total transmutation of mankind as it entered the age of Aquarius. "We live in the reign of fire," he told Swiss radio listeners in 1987. "We are making a leap into macro-evolution. Our brains will undergo subtle and vibratory physical changes, which will mean that man will respond to events in a different way."



Prophet of doom . . . Luc Jouret built up a band of faithful followers consisting mainly of affluent professionals

Jouret jazzed up such familiar New Age talk with his own philosophy of the Temple, "a celestial archetype which brings together men and women capable of mobilising themselves and serving".

But Jouret could not have turned the Order of the Solar Temple into what it became without the help of Joseph Di Mambro, a shady figure also from the Annemasse region, where he worked as a healer. One of their favourite devices was to force their followers to find figures in antiquity of whom they were the reincarnation. The wheeze became an obsession, and soon resulted in the physical, psychological and financial manipulation that were to become the sect's hallmark.

Thierry Huguenin — who should have been the 54th person to die in the wave of collective suicides in October 1994 that included the names of both Jouret and Di Mambro themselves in the list of dead — describes in his book Le 54ème the succession of ordeals organised by Di Mambro in his bid to achieve his initiatory quest: followers were woken up in the middle of the night, kept constantly on the move from one place to another, subjected to Draconian rules of hygiene (their homes had to be disinfected daily), and forced to follow a Spartan vegan diet. "We were in a state of total disorientation that allowed him to get us to believe anything," wrote Hugenin, whose wife Nathalie became a latterday Queen of Atlantis. Another woman was pronounced to be the reincarnation of Queen Bapshepsut, and a third the wife of the centurion Claudius, who pierced Jesus's side. Di Mambro kept sect members in a state of collective hallucination.

He visited "grand masters" who were living in hiding in Zurich, organised ritual ceremonies and talked enthusiastically about "revelations", "miracles" and "apparitions". He was the person who invented the "passports to eternity" and the "survival homes" that would enable followers to escape to "the Apocalypse".

The question that bothers experts in such matters is: why did Di Mambro and Jouret decide to bring forward the date of "the Apocalypse"? Their names had begun to be talked about in the context of matter that had nothing to do with the sect, Di Mambro's in connection with financial swindles, and Jouret's with arms trafficking in Canada.

Did they decide to "give as good as they got" and restore the illusion of a whiter-than-white Order of the Solar Temple by playing out the Apocalypse and enacting a collective suicide? It was certainly a very straightforward operation to organise, since members of the sect had long since yielded up their minds and their freedom to the two evil geniuses.

(December 26)

Prophets in search of a congregation

THERE had been plenty of warnings, from distraught families, opinion pollsters, members of parliament and researchers, that prophets of doom would proliferate in the run-up to 2000. It was clear that, with the collapse of centuries-old ideologies, the waning influence of established churches, the breaking up of the social fabric and the crisis of moral values, the world was going to become a "supermarket" of beliefs and creeds.

Even in a Catholic country like France, books on the esoteric sell more copies than books on Christianity. With its collective trances and invocations of the Holy Spirit, Pentecostalism has spread like wildfire through the overcrowded cities of the Third World. We are told by believers that mankind will shortly see the dawn of a New Age of spiritual and planetary consciousness, as a result of our entering the age of Aquarius.

An increasing number of syncretic groups like the Order of the Solar Temple thus find themselves caught up in a kind of mystico-esoteric constellation based on ancient or obscure traditions, esoteric, alternative practices (in medicine, for example), communal living and "transpersonal" psychology. Together they form the ingredients of a new counterculture for the nineties, chiefly notable for the protean and heterodox nature of the beliefs concerned.

This is an area where the legislator bears a heavy responsibility. Even if one restricts oneself to the situation in France, it is increasingly difficult to distinguish, when faced with such a ragbag of modern beliefs, between the so-called "recognised religions", religions which are not recognised but enjoy a certain status (thanks to the "church associations" provided for by the 1905 law on the separation of church and state), and sects which have no legal status at all (such as the Church of Scientology or Jehovah's Witnesses) but which lay claim to the status provided for by the legislation of 1905 and, to allay suspicion, appoint "ministers" of religion and call themselves "new religious movements" or "minority religions".

After the latest "collective suicide" of the Order of the Solar Temple in the Vercors mountains, public opinion and the media were quick to clamour for a blanket ban on sects. But things are not as simple as that. It has to be remembered that elementary principles of law, such as the right of association and freedom of worship and of expression, are at stake here.

A number of key questions need to be answered: what objective criteria can be applied to determine whether a group or association is a sect or not, or whether it is dangerous or harmless? Is there not a risk, when the term "sect" is used, that philosophical or religious movements may be discredited purely on the grounds that they are minority groups, or that their teachings are unconventional? And while it is clear that sects, in the fullest sense of the term, do exist, it is hard to decide whether the best way of combating them is to introduce specific legislation, or merely to tighten up the law's existing preventive arsenal.

The first phase of action by the French government came with the Vivien Report, which was commissioned by Pierre Mauroy's government in 1982 and published two years later. It called on the police, magistrates, schools and the media to exercise the greatest possible degree of vigilance. But in the past 10 years, following the mushrooming of groups with religious pretensions, and incidents such as those at Waco and now in the Vercors, and child abuse in the Mandarom sect, which is also based in France, the problem has taken on an altogether different dimension.

IN 1992 the Council of Europe, noting that freedom of conscience and of religion, which was guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights, made any substantial legislation on sects problematic. It did, however, advocate educational and legislative measures to prevent abuse.

Since it is impossible to ban sects, or even to pass legislation on them, the full range of already existing repressive measures, in civil, criminal, fiscal and social law, needs to be strictly applied. What exactly is the available arsenal of legislation? The Bouchet Commission on human rights, set up in December 1993, called for a tight control of profits made by sects, as laid down by the law on church associations, and for a strict application of legislation on financial and accounting transparency. A pragmatic solution was proposed, as illustrated recently by an agreement between Jehovah's Witnesses and the defence ministry. Jehovah's Witnesses, who refuse to do any kind of military service, can now perform a civilian form of service without qualifying as conscientious objectors.

But such arguments don't cut much ice with the various groups which help victims of sects, and which themselves have some solid arguments to draw on. They contend that such legal and regulatory provisions are inadequate, since they can be evaded and are anyway impossible to enforce.

And then there is the question of the connivance which — rightly or wrongly — sects are thought to enjoy in the upper echelons of the various civil service departments concerned.

Anti-sect organisations argue that while it is fairly easy to identify and, if need be, to prosecute financial fraud, public disorder or infringement of the law governing the protection of minors, it is virtually impossible to prove that individuals have suffered the kind of mental manipulation reported by people who have managed to escape the Order of the Solar Temple.

What is more, sects are rich enough to hire battalions of lawyers, who twist the law in their favour, snarl up the legal process by resorting to delaying tactics, carry out intimidatory manoeuvres, institute libel actions (often against the press), and impugn witnesses.

In other words, in the eyes of the defence associations and politicians who have been crusading against sects, French law is ill-equipped to deal with the illegal and sometimes tragic activities of sects.

This is an old debate, but it has been given fresh urgency by the need for preventive measures. An increasing number of specialists now believe that such measures will need to encourage, from school age onwards, a genuinely new and open approach towards the culture and history of religions, the aim being to create greater awareness and to prompt comparison.

Somewhere between the set-up in Italy or Germany, where religious classes are the rule, and the situation in France, where such education is virtually non-existent, there is probably a third way. If it were found, it would have the merit of showing that preventive action against sects can start at a very early age, and that the government had at last decided to make it one of its priorities.

(December 27)

Le Monde

Directeur: Jean-Marie Colombani

The Washington Post

Returning to an Uncertain Future

How can the international community guarantee the safe repatriation of refugees in Rwanda and Bosnia, asks **Iain Guest**

EARLY this year the international community will start encouraging more than 4 million uprooted people to return and resettle in Rwanda and Bosnia. Given that both countries are synonymous with genocide, the question needs to be asked whether this is necessary, safe or wise.

In broad terms, the answer must be yes. The essence of ethnic cleansing was violent, forcible expulsion. There will be no peace for these damaged countries unless the victims are allowed to return, if not to their original homes then at least to a site of their choice in their country.

At the same time, conditions hardly seem propitious for a mass return. Croat militia began burning Serb houses in Bosnia before the ink was dry on the Dayton agreement.

In Rwanda, there is such anger about war criminals being at large among Hutu refugees outside the country that returning Hutu are subject to arrest. Here is the stark dilemma of contemporary refugee protection: On the one hand, the international community must take advantage of political openings like the Dayton agreement, and get refugees out of camps and back home. On the other hand, this has to be done without endangering lives. How can both goals be achieved?

Under a 1951 convention, refugees who flee persecution have the right to seek asylum and not be turned away. The international community has made no comparable, legally binding commitment to protect them once they return. In spite of this, in the last five years at least 9 million refugees have gone back to countries that were also once wracked by violence and persecution. These include Burma, Afghanistan, Vietnam, South Africa, Namibia, Cambodia, El Salvador and Mozambique.

The vast majority have returned safely, and there is little to suggest they have been systematically targeted for persecution after returning. It can also be argued that conditions back home will never seem totally ripe for return, and that opportunities must be created and exploited.

This case is convincingly made in the latest State Of The World's Refugees, recently issued by Sadako Ogata, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees. As one of the United Nation's most effective agency heads, Ogata's preference is for practical, and ideally, preventive solutions. Ogata has urged governments to endorse the "right to remain" and "the right to return." Her agency has assumed the burden of assisting more than 5 million persons who have been uprooted by war but forced to remain within their countries' borders.

Peace offerings . . . residents of the former besieged city of Sarajevo jostle for Christmas gifts handed out by Icelandic volunteers PHOTOGRAPH: CHRIS HELGREN

The most complete (and in some ways reassuring) example of Ogata's proactive approach occurred in Cambodia in 1992. Following the Paris peace agreement of October 1991, Cambodia, like Rwanda and Bosnia today, was a dark and brooding land of ghosts, graves and land mines.

Yet UNHCR grasped the nettle and, by starting repatriation on a modest scale, was ultimately able to provide sufficient reassurance to encourage 360,000 Cambodian refugees to return home from Thailand.

Dayton promises to take this one important step further. UNHCR insisted that an annex on refugees be added to the agreement. Sensibly enough, the first to be resettled when repatriation starts next spring will be the 1.3 million internally displaced Bosnians, on the argument that they are the most vulnerable. They will be reassured — and hopefully protected — by 60,000 NATO troops and UNHCR repatriation monitors.

Yet the Dayton plan still makes huge assumptions. So much blood has been shed creating ethnically pure regions that it will clearly not be possible to rebuild a completely multi-ethnic state. People will have to leave to make way for returnees and new arrivals. Partners in a mixed marriage who return to a different ethnic area could have a particularly tense homecoming.

Nor is it clear whether the reconstruction plans currently under discussion for Bosnia will provide a lasting foundation for the safe reintegration of the returning refugees.

Here the precedent of Cambodia is discouraging. In spite of a massive $3 billion effort by the United Nations and internationally supervised elections, some of those who returned home have been displaced by fighting; others have failed to turn their repatriation grant into a lasting investment; more have probably stepped on land mines in 1995 than in 1992. But all this, sadly, is also the fate of Cambodians who never left.

If this casts a shadow over the Bosnian resettlement, it screams out a warning in distant Rwanda, which is viewed with nothing like the same urgency in Western capitals. Some 1.2 million Hutu refugees in Zaire were given until the end of 1995 to return home. The deadline is being quietly revised, but the threat of a massive push-back from Zaire early this year remains real.

This reveals an international community that is still groping, as it struggles to move from peacekeeping to reconstruction. The establishment of two war-crimes tribunals on Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia is an important start because it recognizes the aching need for justice in these countries where law was abandoned.

It is now time to apply the same thinking to repatriation. The reintegration of refugees has been built into several recent peace plans, but there needs to be more consistency and clarity about the safeguards.

There will be no large-scale return of Hutu refugees to Rwanda in its present state; yet donors are unlikely to make a generous commitment to reconstruction unless they see refugees returning home. The best way to break this circle is to concentrate on essentials inside Rwanda, starting with reform of the justice system and punishment of war criminals. Outside the country, in the camps, UNHCR must be given room to create the initiatives that have become its hallmark under Ogata. This might start the process of returns on a manageable scale.

Forcing the peace will do irreparable damage to UNHCR's core mandate — to defend asylum. Even worse, it could trigger a recurrence of the madness in Rwanda. That this is even a remote possibility shows that we are still very close to the edge, for all the achievements of recent years.

Iain Guest is a senior fellow at the Washington-based Refugee Policy Group. He served as the UNHCR spokesman in Cambodia in 1992.

Canadians Seek Closer Ties With Chile

Anne Swardson in Toronto

CANADA and Chile have announced that they will begin bilateral negotiations to reach a free-trade accord, a move designed to fill the gap left when the U.S. Congress failed to approve efforts to include Chile in the North American Free Trade Agreement.

Canadian Trade Minister Roy MacLaren said: "This agreement will provide a bridge to a full NAFTA accession for Chile and will be folded into the NAFTA once the accession negotiations are eventually completed."

If the negotiations succeed, Canada will gain an advantage in South America's healthiest economy — especially if there are further delays in American participation in an expanded NAFTA. The bilateral talks are to begin this month.

The specter of the United States hung over last week's announcement in several ways. For one, Congress so far has not ratified streamlined authority for negotiations to include Chile in NAFTA, which the Clinton administration had hoped would happen in 1995. The Mexican financial crisis, Republican concern about side agreements on labor and the environment, and Democratic concern about possible job losses from free trade have served to undermine congressional enthusiasm for allowing Chile into NAFTA.

Canadian and Chilean officials are assuming no progress will be made on expanding the tripartite accord until 1997, after the elections. Sen. Robert J. Dole, R-Kan., a presidential candidate, wants to go slow on free-trade expansion.

The discussions with Chile are just the latest effort that Prime Minister Jean Chrétien has made to broaden Canada's trading networks. Last year, he led a 250-person trade delegation to six countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. In Chile alone, some $1.2 billion worth of deals were signed.

Action Urged On Trade in Illegal Aliens

William Branigin

IN A report to President Clinton, an interagency working group on the smuggling of illegal aliens to the United States has painted a grim picture of what it calls a "growing trade in human cargo" and recommended a more aggressive global effort to combat it.

The report, the result of a nine-month study by officials of the State Department, Justice Department, Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), Coast Guard, CIA and FBI, describes widespread official corruption and lax law enforcement in several countries as facilitating the flow of hundreds of thousands of people through highly lucrative smuggling pipelines that often lead to the United States. A copy of the report, which was sent to the president in November, was obtained by The Washington Post.

"Viewed globally, trafficking in illegal migrants is an enormous problem," the study says. "This growing trade in human cargo earns smugglers billions of dollars in annual profits" and is "made possible by staggering levels of official corruption." The report recommends dealing with alien-smuggling "at its source, as well as in those transit countries through which migrants are moved to the United States."

Since alien-smuggling is a crime in only a few countries and penalties tend to be minimal, many trafficking organizations "operate with near impunity," the report says. In addition to being suborned by smugglers, it adds, authorities in some countries are reluctant to fight the trade because they view it as a "victimless crime."

Of particular concern lately has been the growth of Europe as "a major gateway to the United States for illegal migration and alien smuggling," in part because of the reduction of border controls and the collapse of strong central authority in the former communist states, the report says. Up to 500,000 illegal aliens enter Western Europe each year, with a similar number waiting in states of Central Europe and the former Soviet Union, and many "will eventually attempt to illegally enter the United States," the report says.

In Central America, all seven of the region's countries have been used to funnel people north to the United States, often overland through Mexico. The annual smuggling traffic includes an estimated 100,000 people from outside the region and 200,000 to 300,000 Central Americans, the report says.

In China, where alien-smuggling has become highly organized and enormously profitable, trafficking gangs succeed in moving up to 50,000 people a year to the United States at fees of up to $35,000 each, the study says. Most arrive by commercial aircraft, typically in small groups with fraudulent documents.

The report criticizes Taiwan for "unsatisfactory" cooperation against alien smugglers. Despite repeated U.S. requests, Taiwan has failed to halt the use of its ships for smuggling and has not made alien-trafficking a crime, the report says.

Yeltsin Comes Out Fighting

Lee Hockstader in Moscow

PRESIDENT Boris Yeltsin appeared in public for the first time in two months after Christmas, stepping out onto the Kremlin grounds to assure a group of startled tourists that he will not permit Russia to turn backward despite the Communist victory in parliamentary elections last month.

Speaking on his first day back at work since he was hospitalized with a heart ailment on October 26, Yeltsin sounded like a man determined to beat back the Communist challenge. While he has not announced his intentions, it is widely assumed he will run in presidential elections in June — if he permits them to be held.

"We won't give anyone an opportunity to move backward," he said, looking reasonably healthy and sounding like his usual gruff self. "We've (had) enough experiments. The Russian people are fed up with experimenting. Russia's situation now is such that if it gets pushed backward, there could be trouble."

The remarks by the president, who says he will make his own political plans known in early February, suggested that he is feeling the heat of the presidential vote even though it is more than five months off.

He is already facing a daunting field of challengers, all of them heartened by Yeltsin's rock-bottom approval ratings and the lackluster showing of pro-government forces in the elections on December 17 for the Duma, Russia's lower house of parliament.

Even former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, who has been flirting with a presidential bid for more than two years even though he is widely disliked, has been edging closer to an announcement. In a round of interviews last month, he hinted broadly that what Russia needs is someone with vast political experience — someone, in fact, just like him.

The more realistic candidates are the ones who did well in the Duma elections. Foremost among them are the Communists, who collected 22.3 percent of the parliamentary vote and can count on an army of loyal retirees to pull the lever for them again in June. Their likely presidential nominee is party leader Gennady Zyuganov, a stolid former bureaucrat who lacks charisma but is now a proven vote-getter.

Ultranationalist Vladimir Zhirinovsky has also said he is running for president. Although his chances appear slim, he has been consistently underestimated by analysts and by polls, and his party managed to win more than 7 million votes, or 11.2 percent of the total, in the parliamentary ballot.

Alexander Lebed, a dour former army general, said last month that he too would run despite his party's dismal 4.3 percent share of the parliamentary vote. Lebed even hinted he would like to make a deal with the Communists, which might have looked appealing before he bombed in the legislative elections.

Lebed seemed popular before he turned to full-time politicking last fall. The more voters got to see of him, the less they liked him. Many Russians said they did not want a military man to hold power, no matter how much of a mess the country is in.

Grigory Yavlinsky, a telegenic young reformer whose party won 6.9 percent of the parliamentary vote, has indicated he may run for president. His candidacy would be a particular threat to Yeltsin, as it could split the pro-reform vote and clear the way for a Communist or nationalist victory.

"Anyway you look at it, Yeltsin's got big problems," a diplomat based here said. "He's got trouble from the Communists, trouble from the nationalists and trouble from his own camp in the person of Yavlinsky."

One question is whether Yeltsin will seek some pretext to cancel or postpone the elections, which some in his camp see as unwinnable.

Another is whether Yeltsin will be physically able to run for reelection. He is an unhealthy 64-year-old man in a country where the average life expectancy for males is 57. He has been out of action for more than three of the last six months suffering from acute ischemia, a disease that restricts the flow of blood to the heart.

After his last bout in October, he was able to speak only with difficulty. After spending a month in the hospital, he moved to a government rest home where he continued to recuperate for another month.

Meanwhile, for weeks before the parliamentary elections, the main candidates crisscrossed the country, some of them visiting dozens of cities and towns and giving scores of speeches and press conferences. Zyuganov and Zhirinovsky, the two most successful candidates, would have several appearances each on a given day, sometimes in different cities.

By all indications, Yeltsin could hardly withstand such a schedule. He acknowledged as much himself, saying that he does not plan to put in very long working days now that he is back in his Kremlin office.

Noting that his travel schedule in the coming months includes visits to China and Norway in March and April, he said: "I have to get stronger before the visit to China — especially since there are plans to visit Shanghai as well as Beijing."



On his feet . . . Boris Yeltsin, flanked by bodyguards, strolls around the Kremlin during his first day back after two months in hospital

Iraq, a Study In Tyranny

(WP)-BW - Jan. 7, 96

EDITORIAL

A STUDY commissioned by the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that a half-million Iraqi children have died because of the international economic sanctions in effect since the end of the Gulf War.

To this stunning toll must be added the malnutrition and disease affecting the many others, children and adults, who are still alive. It adds up to a second Gulf war of historic proportions — a war whose immense civilian casualties apparently fall most conspicuously upon the young.

But that is not the sum of it. The politically and morally defining feature of this second Gulf war is not the extent of the casualties, but that they are being inflicted in what amounts to an undeclared and unequal civil conflict.

On one side, fully armed and fully ready to apply its arms, is the regime of Saddam Hussein. On the other, completely disarmed, are its citizens.

Some good-hearted people in the West and some Arab and Islamic sympathizers can regularly be heard calling on the winners of the Gulf War to have a heart for the children of the losers. But Saddam Hussein could instantly ease the plight of his population.

Trade restrictions on Iraq permit the licensed entry of food, medical supplies and humanitarian aid. The U.N. Security Council has offered Baghdad opportunities to sell oil under Council supervision to pay for such civilian needs, but President Hussein has refused, saying these plans would infringe on Iraqi sovereignty.

In short, it is entirely by his decision that a half-million Iraqi children, if that is the right number, may be gone.

The point is not simply to engage in a contest of words with the Iraqi dictator. His readiness to countenance mass death and suffering among his people provides the keenest available clue to his thinking about his adversaries.

The man who uses the death of Iraqi children as a propaganda display is the same man who, according to the indefatigable U.N. commission that tracks his weapons-building, has never stopped trying to gain the military means to avenge his Gulf-War humiliation.

Any lingering question of whether he would actually be ready to use weapons of terror against foreigners dissolves against the reality of his continuing murderous victimization of Iraq's children.

NASA Satellite Will Hunt for Black Holes

William Harwood at Cape Canaveral

NASA launched a $195 million astronomy satellite at the weekend to probe the enigmatic workings of neutron stars, black holes and the hearts of galaxies at the edge of the known universe.

Equipped with a trio of high-tech instruments, the X-ray Timing Explorer satellite also will record tell-tale radiation from titanic starquakes, sun-destroying novas and other little understood stellar spasms.

The 6,700-pound spacecraft "will allow us to study better than ever before the physics that goes on near . . . black holes and near the surfaces of neutron stars," said Fred Lamb, a physicist at the University of Illinois.

Delayed six times in recent weeks by bad weather and technical problems, the long-awaited mission began at 8:48 a.m. last Saturday when the satellite's Delta-2 rocket blasted off from the Cape Canaveral Air Station.

Seventy-eight minutes later, the XTE satellite was released from the Delta's second stage into a 360-mile-high circular orbit. The spacecraft's solar arrays unfolded normally and began providing power for initial checkout and instrument activation.

If all goes well, scientific observations will begin in about a month.

"It looks like the seventh time was the charm," said project manager Dale Schulz. "It's just down right exciting. It was frustrating getting to this point, but it was well worth it."

XTE's targets represent the final stages of stellar evolution, when stars have burned up all or most of their nuclear fuel.

Stars remain stable by balancing the inward pull of gravity with the outward push of radiation produced by nuclear fusion. When a star's fuel is exhausted, gravity triumphs and the star ultimately collapses. What happens at that point depends on how massive the star was to start with.

The sun, for example, eventually will collapse to the size of a planet, becoming a dim cinder, called a white dwarf, with a density roughly one million times that of Earth.

More massive stars can explode at the end of their lives, leaving behind an ultra-dense high-gravity neutron star — an object with the mass of nearly one million Earths shoehorned into a sphere 10 miles or so across, the size of a small city.

Larger stars can suffer a more bizarre fate: They collapse into the never-never state of a black hole, an object so dense that its gravity is of such strength that not even light can escape.

XTE's targets include suspected super-massive black holes lurking at the cores of some remote galaxies called quasars. "The detection, identification and study of black holes is one of the most fundamental problems of physics and astronomy," Lamb said.

"Since black holes cannot be seen directly, one of the best ways to study black holes is to observe what happens when matter falls from a companion star into the black hole."

Matter falling toward black holes and other massive objects is accelerated by enormous gravitational forces. As particles collide, they get hot enough to generate high-energy X-rays. It is that radiation, emitted in the blink of an eye, that XTE was designed to study.

By monitoring how such emissions change over time, scientists can gain insights into the nature and size of the region producing the radiation.

Nothing can travel faster than light and for an object's X-ray emissions to change in less than one second, for example, the region producing the energy must be less than 186,000 miles — one light second — across.

The XTE satellite is capable of detecting microsecond changes in radiation output. "With such a capability we will probe the inner depths of the witch's cauldron of matter swirling into black holes and onto neutron stars," said principal investigator Richard Rothschild.

Landless Peasants Score Political Gains

Gabriel Escobar in Caruaru

ACROSS from the neat path that leads to the Normandie estate's imposing manor lies a chaotic squatter campground whose unsure tents, which pass for homes, are made of twigs and twine, plastic and paper.

Yet the camp gives the impression of permanence, since the squatters have been here for three years and have no intention of leaving. There is a reason for their persistence.

This camp is a home, but above all it is a political statement — a powerful one these days here in the northeastern state of Pernambuco and throughout Brazil — and the appearance of permanence is crucial to the struggle.

Throughout Brazil this past year, in 90 or so settlements like this, thousands of peasants organized by the 15-year-old Landless Worker Movement have been turned into an indomitable and, in some cases, invincible army of occupation. Armed with picks and shovels and marshaled by the media-savvy national organization, these ragtag squadrons have fought off violent attempts at evictions, suffered and inflicted casualties and in the process made land reform a surprising national priority in a country in which 1 percent of the population owns 45 percent of the privately held land.

In his tent, where a yellow drinking cup and other homey touches hang from the ribs of twigs that miraculously hold the thing together, 74-year-old Arlindo Francisco Versosa has constructed a bed that could well serve as a metaphor for the suddenly influential Landless Worker Movement. Like the remarkably solid bed, which is made of thin rope, slender branches and a few stubby limbs, the movement itself draws its strength from assembling the weakest and most plentiful element of rural Brazil: the landless peasant.

That simple formula is about to convert Versosa, a descendant of slaves, from foot soldier in the movement into unlikely conqueror.

Any day now, Versosa and the other squatters will receive legal right to the land they invaded three years ago, a promise that has been made by none other than Brazil's president, Fernando Henrique Cardoso.

Until very recently, the struggle for land reform in Pernambuco, as in the rest of Brazil, had been uphill, with legal and legislative setbacks obscuring the few victories. But in 1995, the Landless Worker Movement dramatically increased its activism across Brazil, aggressively occupying more land and, for the first time since the early 1960s, forcing the issue onto the national agenda.

Although other important factors are at work here, including a more favorable policy on land reform on the part of Cardoso, many agree that the catalyst for the transformation has been the movement's intractable policy of occupation. The result, according to members of the movement, politicians and even organizations representing Brazil's powerful landowners, is the emergence of the first powerful rural voice since the rebellious Peasant Leagues of the 1950s.

Already some leaders of the movement, citing their growing political muscle and the support their cause now receives in national opinion polls, predict they will have a major impact on municipal elections, especially in a few areas where squatters now form the majority of the population.

The peasant movement's aggressive tactics have produced some of the most serious outbreaks of rural violence in years, including one clash in the far-western state of Rondonia that left 11 peasants dead and hundreds injured. But instead of tempering the activism, these clashes have energized the movement, brought it unprecedented media attention and produced a new wave of recruits. Leaders who a year ago would have been content if the government met its land goals are now confidently demanding more.

"We are not going to work for the goals of the government," said Jaime Amorin, the movement's state coordinator for Pernambuco and a member of the national directorate. "We are going to work for a big social movement, and beyond agrarian reform we are going to push for other reforms."

Such bold talk reflects how far the movement has come. The number of squatters has risen this past year by almost 25 percent across Brazil, this during a period in which the government, responding to the social and political pressure imposed by the movement's activism, has made significant strides.

Cardoso has promised to award land to 280,000 families before 1998, and despite a slow start, officials at the land reform office in Brasilia, the capital, say the target of 40,000 families for 1995 will be met. Although the movement questions that figure, even if fewer families were settled it is still significant, considering land has been distributed to an average of 9,000 families a year since 1980.

People on both sides of the land-reform issue and other analysts cite a number of factors explaining this past year's gains. The emergence of land reform as an issue widely supported by the public has removed some of the political liability that comes with challenging landowners. The last time a Brazilian president moved aggressively to expropriate land was in the early 1960s, when João Goulart's decision to side with the Peasant Leagues helped bring on a coup that ushered in 21 years of military rule.

A number of important economic, social and political factors have helped the peasant movement. Brazil's agriculture is in crisis; the sugar industry, for example, has not recovered from the end of government subsidies. Brazil's conversion to a market-oriented economy has dramatically increased unemployment this year, and the migration is now urban to rural as workers return to the country for a life of subsistence.

Distant Neighbours

Glenn Frankel

INTIMATE ENEMIES
Jews and Arabs in a Shared Land
By Meron Benvenisti
University of California Press
260pp. $24.95

ANYONE who has sought to navigate the dark, uncharted alleyways of the Arab-Israeli conflict over the past decade has come to rely upon Israeli social scientist Meron Benvenisti for guidance. There are Israeli and Palestinian authors like Amos Oz, David Grossman, Amos Elon and Edward Said who write with more stylistic flair or passion. But no one has analyzed the 100-year intercommunal struggle with Arabs and Jews for the narrow strip of famished soil between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean with more authority or consistent insight, and no one has more relentlessly skewered the conventional wisdom, than the iconoclastic Benvenisti.

Benvenisti has never fit in anyone's pigeonhole. As deputy mayor of Jerusalem, he served as Israel's proconsul to the Arabs of East Jerusalem, ruling with a fairness and unsentimental rectitude that eventually alienated his constituents, his boss (the legendary Mayor Teddy Kollek), and finally himself — he quit in disgust over the abiding inequities in the way the Arab sector of the city was treated. As founder and guiding spirit of the West Bank Data Project research group, he angered left- and right-wingers alike with his clear-eyed, brutally frank assessments of the depth and pace of Israeli domination in the occupied territories. Like most prophets, he was without honor in his own land.

But to foreign correspondents such as myself Benvenisti was invaluable. Although indisputably a Zionist, he was one of the few Israelis with the moral courage to put himself in Palestinian shoes. This was a pragmatic, not sentimental, feat. He still saw Palestinians as an enemy. Nonetheless, he believed passionately that it's only when you shed your illusions about who you are and who your enemy is that you can begin to contemplate making peace.

In the prelude to the Palestinian intifada in 1987, Benvenisti was one of the few to recognize and document the low-grade civilian war arising between Arabs and Jews. His small office charted the telling shift in the nature of the conflict: Whereas in the early years of the occupation, most Palestinian violence was committed by armed fighters infiltrating the territories from outside, the new unrest was committed by ordinary Palestinians, mostly young people lashing out with any weapon available — kitchen knives, hatchets and rocks.

Even so, while Benvenisti understood the roots of the intifada and the damage it inflicted, he underestimated its power. He didn't recognize that an act of popular will could have such profound impact on the historical trends he had so meticulously documented. And so he was slow to shift his theories to accommodate the new reality.

Intimate Enemies rectifies that failure. In plain, muscular prose, Benvenisti explains the power and the pain of the intifada and discusses candidly where his own assessments sometimes went awry. And he sandwiches the book with two dramatic events that symbolize the opposite poles and opposite models for the conflict: the October 1990 killing of 19 Palestinian protestors by Israeli police atop Jerusalem's Temple Mount, and the September 1993 handshake on the White House lawn between Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Palestine Liberation Organization President Yasser Arafat.

As always, Benvenisti is the supreme lab technician of the struggle, analyzing its hatreds, contradictions, sensitivities and primal urges. He captures the Israeli sense of vulnerability, paranoia and arrogance and the Palestinian sense of failure, sorrow, humiliation and powerlessness. He captures, too, the paradox of the occupation: Israelis, although victorious, were denied the fruits of their triumph; Palestinians, although sullen and defeated, maintained a great communal vitality. He shows how neither side was prepared to accept the legitimacy of the other — "each side dreamt of the other's disappearance," he writes. And he illustrates his points with fistfuls of small but telling details: for example, the fact that the Israeli police officer responsible for maintaining order on the Temple Mount did not even know the names of the Muslim spiritual leaders he dealt with.



Benvenisti charted 'the telling shift in the nature of the conflict between Arabs and Jews'

WHERE Benvenisti went wrong, he concedes in Intimate Enemies, was in his almost romantic perception of the conflict. He says he did not see how the entire ideological debate between left and right in Israel had grown stale and anachronistic, and how most Israelis — increasingly attracted by the temptations of bourgeois consumer society — became bored with the conflict and eager for a pragmatic solution. You can't maintain constant vigilance, spend at least 15 percent of your gross national product on defense and still have time and money to buy Japanese cars and electronics. When offered the possibility of "separation" — of walling off the Gaza Strip and West Bank and getting Palestinians out of sight and out of mind — mainstream Israelis responded with enthusiasm. "A desire for 'separation' prompted by hatred, boredom, alienation and weariness of violence — not ideological commitment to peace — was the source of public support" for Yitzhak Rabin's peace deal, Benvenisti writes. Rabin and Arafat, in other words, weren't getting married on the White House lawn, they were getting divorced.

As for the Palestinians, Benvenisti had always believed that their remorse and rage over losing their homeland would drive them to absolutism. "It did not occur to me that the Palestinians could reach such a state of weakness and go through a period of such desperation that they would recognize defeat," he concedes. Thus was the troubled road paved for the Oslo accords and the White House signing.

Although he derides their motives, Benvenisti concedes that Israelis gave up much in the Oslo negotiations: recognizing their archenemy and accepting the other side's symbols of legitimacy and, in effect, scrapping their longstanding perception of themselves as the sole legitimate community in the region. The 1993 document, he writes, "had redefined the enmity," transforming Israelis and Palestinians "from demonic foes into legitimate enemies," establishing a "marketplace" in which real negotiations could proceed.

Of course, Benvenisti is still not convinced that a true resolution is at hand. He fears that the deal is merely between elites, leaving the masses on both sides "still permeated with the old irrational disposition" — that the Temple Mount massacre embodies the true nature of the conflict while the White House law signing is a mere episode. The quasi-colonial economic relationship between Israelis and Palestinians remains intact.

And the concept of physical separation is a pipedream, he believes. The constant terrorism against Israelis by Arab extremists prepared to blow passenger buses and themselves to paradise, and the constant humiliation of Palestinians remain the incurable, corrosive facts of Middle East life.

Resolution will come, he writes, only when both sides understand "the simple fact that the two communities are doomed to live side by side forever, and that neither can destroy the other."

"Israeli-Palestinian reconciliation is still a dream," he concludes, but adds with rare touch of optimism: "There is a place for that dream too."

Glenn Frankel is the former Jerusalem bureau chief for The Washington Post.

Victorian Passion in the Desert

Luree Miller

REBEL HEART
The Scandalous Life of Jane Digby
By Mary S. Lovell
Norton. 384pp. $25

PORTRAITS of the Regency beauty Jane Digby bear a striking resemblance to Pamela Digby Harriman, the current U.S. ambassador to France and Jane's direct descendant. Even the two women's characters are similar, Jane's biographer Mary Lovell declares: Both women display an abundance of "intelligence and charm, an unselfconscious sexuality, a disregard of the mores that accept (even admire) polygamy in men but deprecate similar behaviour in women." Lovell's introductory assertion linking Jane Digby with Pamela Harriman to grab readers' attention also implies sympathy for the free-spirited Jane (1807-1881), who was born in the wrong century for the acceptance of her amorous adventures.

Jane Digby began life with everything going for her: breeding, beauty, brains and wealth. She grew up in one of England's great houses, adored by her family, and was given the same education as her two brothers.

Jane was destined for great social success. At the age of 18 she married 35-year-old Lord Ellenborough, who proved to be a neglectful philanderer. But Jane tried to be a good wife, until a dashing Austrian diplomat swept her off her feet. The hypocritical Lord Ellenborough charged her with adultery. At 21 Jane was divorced, and all the doors of English society immediately slammed shut against her.

Unrepentant, Jane followed her Austrian to Europe. "Being loved," she wrote, "is to me as the air I breathe." The search for a perfect love was the leitmotif of Jane's life. When the Austrian diplomat failed her, she turned to King Ludwig I of Bavaria, then to a series of other lovers and husbands, reputedly 14 in all. Sensational accounts of each new liaison emblazoned English newspapers. Particularly titillating was her affair with an Albanian bandit chief. But when Jane discovered that the chief was dallying with Eugenie, her devoted maid, she left him a curt note and sailed for Beirut with Eugenie. "Who can blame Jane," Lovell writes, "for concluding that, while men were relatively easy to come by, a good maid was beyond price?"

Jane Digby was nearly devoid of maternal instincts. She kept with her only one of her six children, and he died at the age of 6. As her 50th birthday loomed, Jane lamented that she was once again "alone, quite alone." It was time, she reflected, to be done with men and the problems they had caused her throughout her life. At this juncture, as she was wending her way to Damascus, into Jane's life rode Sheikh Medjuel el Mezrab.

He was a desert prince, cultivated, courtly and multilingual. He was in his late twenties when he looked upon the still beautiful Jane, some 20 years his senior, and fell in love with her. Uncharacteristically, it took her some time to recognize his ardor. When she finally did, she realized that at last she had found her perfect love. Medjuel and Jane married and remained devoted to each other until her death at the age of 74.

Accounts of the nomadic Bedouin desert life that Jane shared with her sheikh enliven the latter half of her biography. She won the respect and admiration of Medjuel's tribe with her fearless mastery of both horses and camels. Age seemed not to diminish Jane's stamina for riding through the desert night, sometimes 14 hours in the saddle. For her 73rd birthday, Medjuel gave her a beautiful Arabian mare.

Respites from the austere desert life were always available in the imposing house and gardens that Jane built in Damascus. There she welcomed English visitors as well as Arab leaders and tribal groups.

Unlike most pioneer women travelers, she had no geographical goals or deep interests outside of herself. Unabashedly self-centered, she was intelligent and fascinating but not an inspiring trailblazer lighting the way for followers. However, she did impart her intimate knowledge of harems and Middle Eastern sexual practices to the famous Orientalist Richard Burton, who shocked Europe with his interpretation of this esoteric information in The Perfumed Garden and his translation of The Arabian Nights.

Many romantic myths about Jane Digby were perpetuated by Isabel Burton in her writings and by Lesley Blanch in her popular pre-feminist book The Wilder Shores Of Love. Fortunately, Mary Lovell stumbled onto Jane's letters and diaries, which had been preserved by her family. From these accounts, plus Lowell's own scrupulous research, she has finally set the record straight about an amazing, accomplished and much maligned woman. It is a unique story well told.

A Nobel vision of fair shares for all

Will Hutton salutes the radical and humane legacy of James Meade

THE nineties are emerging as the decade in which mass unemployment has become embedded and inequality has risen to a level incompatible with good society.

The recent falls in unemployment, although welcome, have delivered only a minor dent in what remains a massive economic and social problem; 1996 will bring little change.

The often-repeated story is that mass unemployment is essentially an act of God. The Government can only take responsibility for maintaining "sound" public finances and ensuring that no risks are run with inflation. Unemployment is a labour market problem — not a problem of macro-economic policy. It must be solved by lowering wages to a level that prices the jobless into work.

This has no logic — even in its own terms. When employers are in a buyers' market, they have the power to bid down wages — but there must come a point, even in this theory, when the labour market starts to tighten as full employment is approached. It becomes a sellers' market and workers start to have market power.

Those at the bottom who have hitherto accepted pitiful wages insist on rises that move them closer to the average; those above them attempt to maintain differentials. Soon there is the wage/price spiral that has characterised nearly all market economies.

In truth, the Government, pledged to meet its inflation target, would act pre-emptively to deflate the economy before the spiral got under way. But the only way for that to work is to run the economy beneath capacity with a reserve army of unemployed; this empowers capitalists in relation to workers and permits low wage inflation — but it is inefficient and morally offensive.

A policy that knowingly excludes millions from the world of work inhabits the same moral universe as apartheid. Exclusion from work implies exclusion from mainstream society, which in turn means exclusion from the political preoccupations of the majority. A democratic government that deliberately runs the economy with high unemployment sets out to debar some of its citizens from their economic and social rights.

But unemployment is also the overriding source of waste and inefficiency. It is not merely that more than 9 per cent of the UK labour force, by standard definitions, is idle and its contribution to raising output forever lost. It is that the whole economy moves into a low gear from which it is impossible, unaided, to escape. Incomes, expenditure and output are lowered, in turn lowering the level of investment and the trend growth of the economy. Unemployment appears to be justified by low growth, which demands that wages be bid down even more to support employment. Poverty and social despair become widespread; eventually the state itself is undermined.

The only way for those in power to escape the moral charge against them is to insist that their actions are involuntary. Unemployment is the unemployed's fault; not the policy-maker's.

It is this mind-set that James Meade, one of only three Britons to win the Nobel prize for economics, spent his life contesting. Just before his death this Christmas he released a small book, Full Employment Regained? (Cambridge University Press) which, as he said, was a digest of almost all he had thought and written on unemployment — with recommendations for "a rather startlingly radical reform of our present economic and financial procedures". This quietly ferocious attack on current orthodoxies was intended as his bequest; it deserves to be widely read.

Meade believed in the Keynesian truth that governments have an obligation to organise interest rate and budgetary policy so as to offer a guarantee of steadily rising demand. Unemployment is exacerbated by poor skills, so training has to be improved; but he said training alone could not lower unemployment if the economy was depressed.

In short, he was an expansionist, with a preference for organising an economic boost via low interest rates rather than high budget deficits; and if the economy had to be slowed, use higher taxes to do the job. Interest rates should remain as low as possible for as long as possible, to boost investment — which the tax system should underwrite by sheltering savings and investment rather than consumption.

He damned the current approach, of trying to hit a future measure of consumer price inflation, as "torture"; any external shock which impacted on consumer prices — whether a rise in import prices, a fall in the real exchange rate or a rise in indirect taxes — had to be compensated for by deflating the entire economy. He insisted that the correct target was the measure of economy-wide inflation — the GDP deflator — and urged that, if a government wanted to keep demand growing constantly, the right policy focus was the rate of economic growth adjusted by changes in prices across the whole economy — money GDP.

BUT MEADE did not stop there. How was inflation to be kept down as the economy approached full employment if the government discarded a policy of pre-emptive deflation? The answer was two-fold. Meade hankered for a new bargain between capital and labour which would allow more workers to be hired — but capital to be protected from aggressive wage claims. He floated the idea of "discriminating labour-capital partnerships" in which newly hired workers receive a comparatively low wage, with top-up income from dividends on share certificates. Long-standing workers would have more certificates and thus a higher income — and the starting wage for new workers would be lower, making it easier for them to be recruited without damaging the interests of senior employees.

In addition, Meade was not hopeful that the unskilled would get work at wages acceptable in a civilised society. His solution is a form of guaranteed basic income paid to every adult, financed by the abolition of personal tax allowances, higher inheritance tax and a tax surcharge on the first slice of income above the basic income level. But mischievously, Meade goes one step further. He urges that the government aim for a budgetary surplus and by investing the proceeds gradually build up a national stock of shares and public assets, the income distributed as an additional social dividend.

Meade acknowledges that his whole scheme may seem an unrealistic dream — but better that than the wasteland of modern capitalism. Nor is it as impossible as it may seem at first sight. The growing consensus that British industry needs more long-term, patient financial support is only another version of a Meade-style bargain between capital and labour.

Lower hurdle rates and longer-term paybacks through recasting City/industry relationships mean that the cost of capital is lowered, raising investment and thus the marginal productivity of labour. This is a different route to the Meadean destination; it raises the demand for labour at the prevailing real money wage and so lowers unemployment.

Nor are Meade's obsession with inequality for the birds. Meade's proposals to raise revenue to finance his basic income are certainly radical; my preference is more cautious, instead deploying additional tax revenues to protect the current welfare state.

The legacy of this self-avowed "old Keynesian" is that good society can coexist with capitalism. It is a legacy we must keep alive; James Meade deserves no less.

Obituary, page 22

Amstrad abandons hope as chief logs off

Roger Cowe

THE end of Amstrad's traditional computer and electronics business, one of the great success stories of the eighties, was heralded as the group announced that its chief executive, David Rogers, would leave after failing to revitalise flagging sales.

Amstrad will continue as a holding company for businesses it has acquired over the past few years. Existing Amstrad operations will be merged with these new subsidiaries, leading to an unspecified number of redundancies among the workforce of over 1,000.

Mr Rogers was brought in 18 months ago to share the running of the group with founder Alan Sugar. But he agreed to resign after the board abandoned his strategy of trying to build up the company's traditional business, which trades as Amstrad Consumer Electronics (ACE).

The company said it intended to reduce ACE's cost base "in line with its sales potential".

Director Michael Beckett insisted the parting was not a consequence of any clash between Mr Rogers and Mr Sugar, adding that the search would begin for a replacement.

The departing chief executive had a three-year contract but under new rules on pay-offs he is expected to be paid little more than his annual salary of £225,000.

Mr Beckett said products would still be sold under the Amstrad brand, and the Amstrad Direct mail order operation would continue.

In the eighties Amstrad could not sell computers fast enough. Then consumers ran out of money, and the makers ran out of ideas for electronic goods that would tempt them in the kind of numbers which home computers once had.

The group's future now lies with the direct-sales computer company Viglen, the mobile phone company Dancall and other acquisitions made since the defeat of Mr Sugar's attempt to buy back his company and leave the stock market.

In Brief

JAPAN'S ministry of finance suffered a humiliating blow when its senior official, Kyosuke Shinozawa, resigned over a series of financial scandals that have undermined trust in banks, the ministry and the country's whole financial system. Opposition MPs called for his political master, finance minister Masayoshi Takemura, to go as well.

THE number of larger UK companies going bust rose in 1995 for the first time in three years, a survey shows. A total of 17,280 bigger firms went into liquidation — up 4.6 per cent on 1994 — says Dun & Bradstreet.

THE man who broke Barings, Nick Leeson, will not appeal against his six-and-a-half-year sentence in Singapore for fraud and forgery. Under Singaporean law, the judge can impose a stiffer sentence.

BRITISH PETROLEUM is poised to sign a Saharan desert gas exploration deal with Algeria that could lead to a $3.5 billion project.

AIRBUS, the European plane-making consortium, is to share a $2.7 billion order from Philippines Airlines (PAL) with Boeing, the US aircraft maker.

LLOYD'S List, the oldest international newspaper, was sold by the troubled Lloyd's insurance market to its management for £82.5 million.

ENCYCLOPAEDIA Britannica has been sold to one of America's powerful banking families for as much as $400 million.

GEEST has sold its bananas business for almost $230 million to a joint venture between arch-rival Fyffes and the Windward Islands.

PRESSURE for Granada to raise its £3.4 billion offer for hotel group Forte intensified as Forte announced a £1.05 billion deal to sell its roadside cafés and budget hotels to Whitbread.

CREDITORS of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International are set to share $2 billion compensation.

PROFITS at Goldman Sachs, the Wall Street investment house, soared to $1.37 billion last year.

THE lowest mortgage rates for 30 years and tax cuts have led bank and building society surveys to predict a housing market upturn in 1996.

AN ARAB sheikh bought the entire contents of a London furniture shop for £350,000 at the start of the January sales.

Opportunity abroad

Health Project Manager, India.

The Orissa Health and Family Welfare Project is the largest Overseas Development Administration (ODA) funded health sector project in India and is managed by the British Council. Helping to develop the availability and quality of health services, the project aims to contribute to improvements in the health status of the people in Orissa, especially in disadvantaged groups.

The British Council is seeking an experienced manager for a new phase of this major project. The appointment will be subject to the finalisation of the contract between the client (ODA) and the British Council. The successful applicant will have overall management responsibility which includes: representing ODA interests; monitoring the project's progress; liaising with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare; financial control and progress reporting as well as line management of key project staff.

Qualifications and experience

Applicants should be either British citizens or EU nationals or Commonwealth citizens with an established right of abode and right to work in the United Kingdom.

He/she will have a higher degree relevant to the management of health care projects in developing countries, or a higher degree in a related subject, supported by application in a health sector setting. Necessary skills include: project management; first class communication, interpersonal and organisational skills; ability to lead a multi-disciplinary team; financial management and experience of IT in project management. Candidates must be able to demonstrate successful application of their specialist skills to practical aid and development issues in the health sector. Several years' experience of development projects, preferably complex process projects, including working directly with major project stakeholders, is essential. A significant proportion of this experience should have been gained in a management role. Relevant experience in India, or elsewhere in South Asia, and a familiarity with ODA's current policies and procedures will be an advantage.

Salary and allowances: between £26,000 and £35,000 per annum; superannuation compensation addition; plus overseas allowances as applicable.

Benefits: include free accommodation; airfares; baggage allowance; medical insurance and child education allowances.

Contract: initially for two or three years, commencing 1 April 1996.

Closing date for applications: *Wednesday 31st January 1996.*

Interviews: *to be held in Manchester early February 1996.*

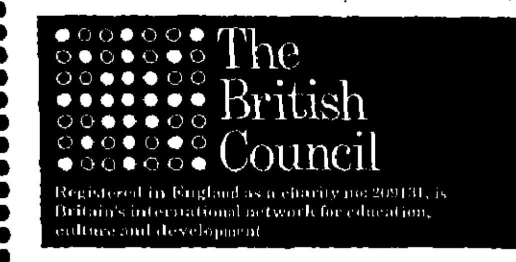
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Requests for further details and application form, quoting post reference and enclosing A4 sae (38p) to: Mark Hepworth, Overseas Appointments Services, The British Council, Medlock Street, Manchester, M15 4AA.

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Horn of Africa Regional Programme

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Interview date: 20 February 1996

Please quote ref: OS/PM/HA/AD/GW

Regional Representative for Southern Sudan and Somali Programme

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A 2 year accompanied post.

Salary includes national Kenyan salary (current equivalent £15,200 approx) plus relocation allowance payable at 40% of home base salary to those crossing national boundaries - For those originating from EC countries this will be £8,994.

Interview date: 22 February 1996

Please quote ref: OS/RR/SSSP/AD/GW

Programme Manager for Somaliland

Based in Hargheisa — **Salary: £18,091 pa (taxable) plus accommodation**

A 1 year unaccompanied post.

Interview date: 5 March 1996

Please quote ref: OS/PM/SL/AD/GW

Programme Coordinator for Upper Nile, Sudan

Based in Malakal, Sudan — **Salary: £18,091 pa (taxable) plus accommodation**

A 1 year unaccompanied post.

Interview date: 7 March 1996

(Please note this post is subject to funding)

Please quote ref: OS/PC/UN/AD/GW

Programme Mechanic/Trainer for Southern Sudan

Based in Lokichokkio and Sudan — **Salary: £15,210 pa (taxable) plus all field living expenses**

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Interview date: 21 February 1996

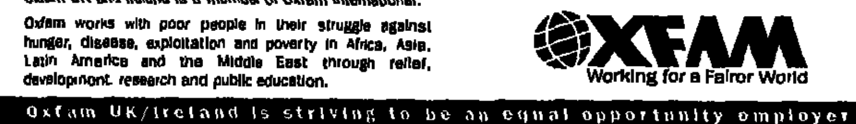
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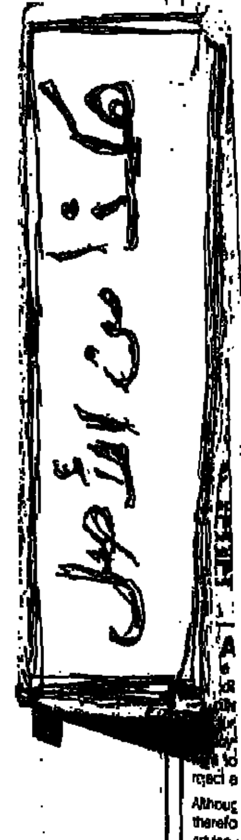
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GUARDIAN WEEKLY
January 7 1996

Economic force for good

James Meade

WITH the death of James Meade, Britain has lost its most outstanding economist — the one who, by general consent, should have been first to win appointment to the Order of Merit. Meade, who was 88, had maintained a constant interest in ways of improving the economic and social organisation of the country.

Throughout his career Meade addressed himself to the big issues: how to reduce unemployment, control inflation and maintain external balance, pursuing economic theory not as an end in itself but as a guide to policy.

In government during and after the war he showed a remarkable originality and versatility in his proposals. In academic life he gave form and system to a wide range of ideas in a long series of volumes on social and economic principles, bringing out the bearing of these principles on policy and avoiding controversy. In recognition of his work — particularly on international economics — he was awarded a Nobel Prize in 1977.

Born in Bath into a family distantly related to the General Meade who commanded the United States army in the American Civil War, James Meade went from Malvern College in 1926 to Oriel, Oxford, with a scholarship in classics. After two years he moved over to Politics, Philosophy and Economics, graduating with a first in 1930. He was elected to a fellowship at Hertford with freedom to spend his first year as a postgraduate student in economics. He accepted an invitation from Dennis Robertson, whom he already knew, to join him at Trinity, Cambridge, as student. There he became a member of the "Circus" that was reporting weekly to JM Keynes on the ideas emerging from a group made up of Joan and Austen Robinson, Richard Kahn and Piero Sraffa while Keynes was making the transition from the theory outlined in The Treatise On Money (1930) to the more dynamic analysis of the General Theory Of Employment, Interest And Money (1936).

In his first published work, Public Works In Their International Aspect (1933), Meade dealt with the origins of a depression in terms not very different from Keynes three years later. He showed, like Keynes, how investment during a depression would automatically generate additional savings on the necessary scale by producing an expansion in employment and income.

Meade's year in Cambridge turned him into a disciple of Keynes at the beginning of his academic career and he remained under the influence of Keynes ever afterwards. But he never went completely overboard in his acceptance of Keynes's ideas. From the 1970s onwards, for example, he urged that policy should aim at stabilising not the real level of national product but instead the monetary value (gnp) so that, if costs and prices rose, the level of unemployment would be allowed to increase. He also retained much of what he had learned from Dennis Robertson on the difficulty of keeping aggregate investment moving steadily upwards.

On his return to Oxford Meade remained for some years at Hertford, where he also served as bursar between 1934 and 1937. In 1936 he produced what served as the first modern textbook, An Introduction To Economic Analysis And Policy.

In April 1940 Meade was offered a position in the War Cabinet offices. His work on national income was only a small part of his wartime activity. He was particularly occupied with problems of post-war reconstruction, beginning in July 1941 with a paper on measures for the prevention of general unemployment. In 1942 he took advantage of the appointment of the Beveridge Committee to submit later ideas of which the most important was his proposal to vary the national insurance contribution of employers with a view to encouraging employment in a slump and discouraging it in a boom. His ideas on postwar unemployment policy were further developed in a lengthy comment on Beveridge's Full Employment In A Free Society which, as he pointed out, had much in common with the White Paper of 1944.

A second important initiative was Meade's proposal in 1942 for an international commercial union. This was intended to supplement Keynes's plan for a clearing union and led to extensive discussions between London and Washington with a view to the ultimate establishment of an international trade organisation. Meade took an active part in the discussions leading up to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (Gatt), of which he was as much as any man the originator.

In 1947 Meade returned to academic life as Professor of Commerce at the London School of Economics, where he remained for the next 10 years. He began by writing Planning And The Price Mechanism (1948), arguing for the superiority of market mechanisms over government planning as instruments for the co-ordination of economic activity while accepting the need for planning of a more limited kind, making use of budgetary and financial policy but not seeking to accomplish through government action what private enterprise could do more successfully.

He then concentrated on the problems of the UK balance of payments and declared his intention of dedicating the next 18 years of his life to a six-volume study of the principles of international trade. Although the design was never completed he finished two magisterial volumes on The Theory Of International Policy (1951 and 1955), one dealing with the balance of payments and the other with the relationship between trade and welfare. It was these volumes that laid the basis for the award of a Nobel Prize.


Meade . . . enthusiast, but never a dogmatist

Meade was also occupied in the 1950s with the problems of economic integration. He produced three books on the subject as well as articles on Benelux and others on the United Kingdom and the European Common Market. But what attracted most attention at the time was his advocacy of floating exchange rates in 1955, at a time when that was still very much a minority view.

Meade was a man of principle and sought above all the principles that should guide a fair and prosperous society. He was a delightful colleague, full of ideas, modest, inventive, entertaining and full of good sense. He was an enthusiast, but never a dogmatist; clear-headed and lucid, systematic and rational.

Sir Alec Cairncross

James Meade, economist, born June 23, 1907; died December 22, 1995

A lesson to us all

Arthur Mee

ARTHUR MEE, who has died aged 89, was the man behind the 1960s revolution in school science curricula in Britain and the Commonwealth. As one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and then senior science inspector in Scotland, he organised radical new physics, chemistry and biology curricula, and later introduced an entirely new approach to integrated science for the first two years of secondary school. These programmes were very successfully adapted in New Zealand, Hong Kong, Malaysia, southern Africa, Nigeria, Malta and the Caribbean.

"A J", as Mee was known to friends and colleagues, was ably supported by talented young HMI inspectors. Ideas and practice were underpinned by first-class teaching materials written by authors who were to become household names in school science. These approaches had to work for average teachers in typical schools with modest resources. AJ had a remarkable ability to get people to work very hard without resorting to cajolery. To his younger, sometimes headstrong colleagues he was a calm father-figure who smoothed their way through the education establishment.

His energy was compelling. Well after normal retirement age, he was promoting the Scottish science curricula abroad — for the British Council and similar agencies. I once met him, as publisher of Scottish material at Heinemann, at Heathrow airport on his way to run a science workshop in the Caribbean. I asked him to go, immediately on his return, to Nigeria to run a workshop for the local science teachers' association, and produce materials for a new, Scottish-based integrated science scheme.

On the first day in Ibadan the participants were looking forward to the usual talking shop. AJ politely but firmly corrected this misapprehension. They were there to create publishable materials. Each person had a topic and was asked to deliver a section of text to him within five days for his comment and "revision" (ie, rewriting by A J).

A fortnight later he returned with a complete course — pupils' texts and teachers' guides — for a two-year science course. The resulting books sold millions of copies through the Nigerian Science Teachers' Association.

Mee's Physical Chemistry (1934) was a standard textbook for first degree courses for three decades. Forty years later, he co-wrote a best-selling textbook series for Scottish integrated science. Educated at Woolwich Polytechnic and Trinity College, Cambridge, he became a school science teacher, and later head of science at Glasgow Academy, before being appointed HMI in 1946.

He was an active member of his local Congregationalist Church. His first wife died in 1985, and he is survived by his second wife and the son and daughter of his first marriage.

Hamish MacGibbon

Arthur James Mee, educationist and science textbook author, born May 12, 1906; died December 13, 1995

Talent taken too easily

Dean Martin

AMERICAN vaudeville parlance had a word for Dean Martin, who has died of acute respiratory failure at the age of 78: he was a disappointment act. Traditionally, these were the people substituting for performers who failed to turn up in time for a show. Martin failed to substitute for himself.

His story is a show-business tragedy of epic proportions. Alas, it all makes the perfect script for one of those movies in which he starred — except that they usually had a happy ending. Dean Martin allowed himself to fall off the professional bar stool far too soon, and certainly far too often.

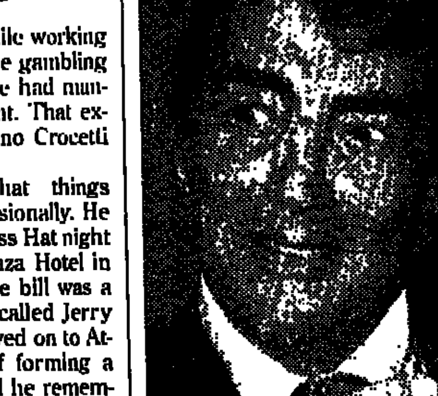
His origins were almost as much part of Hollywood cliché as his final days. Dino Crocetti was born in Steubenville, Ohio to Italian parents. He left school at 14 and became a welterweight boxer, fighting under the name of Kid Crochet — and only gave it up when his hands became mangled (as a result, he said, of poor binding under the gloves). He worked in a cigar store, and then as a croupier in an illegal gambling joint, a job he gave up because his hands were on view too much.

It was looking for something else to do that turned him into a singer, copying Bing Crosby while working with a band in one of the gambling establishments where he had managed to find employment. That experience also turned Dino Crocetti into Dean Martin.

It was in 1948 that things changed for him professionally. He was booked into the Glass Hat night club at the Belmont Plaza Hotel in New York. On the same bill was a young, zany comedian called Jerry Lewis. When Lewis moved on to Atlantic City, the idea of forming a double act came up and he remembered Martin. They soon developed not just a highly successful night club routine, but by the time they made their first film together — My Friend Irma, in 1949, quickly followed by My Friend Irma Goes West — they had become the heirs to Abbott and Costello.

The bust in the Martin-Lewis relationship came in 1957, when Jerry branched out into production with a movie called The Delicate Delinquent. He cast Dean as a New York policeman, with barely more than a handful of lines to say. Martin threw the script at his "pardner" and their relationship was over.

Dean always said that joining Jerry Lewis was the most sensible thing he ever did. "The second most sensible thing was leaving him." Indeed, he left him for a screen career on his own. In 1958, he amazed audiences with his part as a draft dodger-turned-hero in The Young Lions, based on the Irwin Shaw novel. One critic noted his "beautifully shaded performance".


Martin . . . reputation for gentle inebriation

He followed that with a bittersweet role as a gambler who never removes his hat in Some Came Running, in which he co-starred with Shirley MacLaine and Frank Sinatra — an important event in his life because it marked the next stage in the Martin story, his entry into Sinatra's "clan" or "rat pack". But before he got too involved with them, he made Rio Bravo, co-starring with John Wayne in what is now regarded as one of the finest Westerns of all time. It was certainly Dean Martin's finest role.

He did have it in him. Observers were waiting for the Dean Martin Oscar. Instead, he got more involved with the rat pack, appearing with them — Sinatra, Sammy Davis Jnr, Joey Bishop and Peter Lawford — in movies like Ocean's Eleven, Sergeants Three, Four For Texas, and Robin And The Seven Hoods.

The man who had stunned critics and audiences alike as a solo performer seemed to enjoy playing second or third fiddle to Sinatra's "chairman of the board".

Martin was more and more trading on his reputation for gentle inebriation, helped considerably by his built-in sense of humour. Sammy Cahn wrote a series of highly appropriate lyrics for him, like "When You're Drinking, When You're Drinking, The Show Looks Good For You." Dean used to say on stage: "People say I drink too much, but I only drink moderately. In fact, I've a whole case of Moderately in my dressing room."

Michael Freedland

Dean Martin (Dino Crocetti), singer and actor, born June 17, 1917; died December 25, 1995

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
January 7 1996

Battle joined on Britain's streets

Ulster may be moving towards peace but the world's wars in exile are being waged in London, reports **Ed Vulliamy**

ASLAN AGANOGLU sat back in his chair: "London is warming up," he said. And he wasn't referring to the weather. Aganoglu — UK leader of the ultra-right Turkish "Grey Wolves" — was more likely to be thinking about the Libyan murdered with a knife in Westbourne Grove. Or the stones thrown by Kurds against his own office in Stoke Newington. Or the Ealing-based Algerian extradited to France on a bombing charge. Or the execution of a Sikh newspaper editor in Southall. Or perhaps he was contemplating accusations that the Grey Wolves themselves had teamed up with the Turkish secret services to attack Kurds in Dalston.

All in all, you could be forgiven for thinking that the capital has become a mini-battlefield for the world's wars in exile, that behind the fumes of exotic cuisine, there is a whiff of conspiracy, rebellion and revenge from distant lands.

The building next to the pet shop at Newington Green seems an unlikely place to start investigating. This is the headquarters of the Turkish Islamic Association. Mehmet (no surname supplied), in black leather jerkin, answers the door (which has a tell-tale wire-mesh coating to protect it). Mehmet summons his mate Burak from the other side of the road to help with English. Yes: two years ago three Kurdish firebombs were lobbed in; in November, 25 cars pulled up in Green Lanes from which "40 or 50 Kurds" emerged throwing rocks. A battle ensued. "We know who they are and we are their main targets," says Burak, "him and me especially", gesturing to Mehmet.

Above Mehmet's desk is a flag featuring a Grey Wolf howling at the crescent moon. The Grey Wolves are best known for a spate of assassinations in the 1970s and for the fact that Mehmet Ali Agca, who tried to shoot the Pope in 1982, was a member. Five "Wolves" have been sentenced to death for murder by Turkish courts since 1984.

Aslan is leader of the pack, chairman of the UK branch of the Grey Wolves. He has just moved his Mirabel Fashion Company Ltd into a warehouse overlooking the tireless hive of New Street in Stepney. His desk stands unaccompanied in the bare space. He speaks erudite English. The Grey Wolves, he explains "were engaged in a bloody battle" against the left in the 1970s: "We know how to do these things." He is more content, however to discuss the handiwork of his opponents, the Kurdish PKK — Workers Party — which he claims runs protection rackets "with the aid of the British government and leftist councils". PKK has entrenched to such an extent, he says, that "the time may come when we have to act against them".

The Halkavi Centre, Stoke Newington Road, is at the heart of what could be called Little Kurdistan. It has a membership of 4,000 Kurds and 1,000 Turkish communists. Inside is a mural featuring columns of Kurdish guerrillas winding through a mountainscape. There are portraits of the mercurial, scarlet-pimpernel Abdullah Ocalan, the PKK leader. Kurdish TV broadcasts from in the corner, through the steam of the kebab grill and strong coffee.

Nafiz Bostanci, director of the Halkavi, visited the Old Bailey last month for the trial of Cuneyt Sigdeniz, a Turkish Cypriot charged with attempting to murder Bostanci outside his shop in Kingsland Road the previous year. "The bullet whizzed past my head — I heard it whistle." A second wounded his assistant, Ali. Bostanci blames the Turkish secret police, MIT, with a question mark over the Grey Wolves. The Grey Wolves call the attack a PKK "set-up".

Bostanci says that in 1994 a local policeman came to warn him of a Turkish plot to murder him in London. The police warning was followed by a visit to the Halkavi Centre by a Turk called HY who said it was he who had tipped off the police, and was himself involved in the plot. HY said he was "under pressure from the MIT and the fascists" and there was "good money" in rubbing out Bostanci. He and the defendant, Sigdeniz, had been two of a trio, and HY had been arrested after a witness saw him giving a gun to "a black person". But the charge against HY of conspiracy to murder was dropped. Bostanci believes HY did a deal in the time-honoured tradition: exchanging his reportedly excellent contacts in the drug-running and immigrant-smuggling trades for a clean slate from the law.

The PKK, says Bostanci, does not engage in extortion, "although some Turkish left groups do that kind of thing". The PKK does, however, "punish smugglers of people", because they want Kurds to stay in Kurdistan. The Molotov bomb attacks against the Grey Wolves? "Teenagers angry that their villages have been destroyed." And the British Telecom employee badly burned by one of them? "A mistake."

The faithful from across the planet spill out of Regent's Park mosque after the most important prayers of the week each Friday lunchtime. These days, they are confronted by stalls and platoons of leafleteers — invariably from the revolutionary movements, the feared and reviled Islamic underground. The most organised stall is run by Hizb ut-Tahrir, the Party of Liberation, an international movement dedicated to a global Islamic state under Islamic law — Khilafah. The group is vehemently opposed to Muslim "pragmatists" who would co-operate with secular or "evil" regimes — that is to say, all existing governments. The British section was banned from campus activity by the National Union of Students after it posited that "the only place to meet Jews is on the battlefield" — by which, they insist, they meant in the West Bank and Israel, and not in places such as Tottenham, north London, where the group is based.

Next to the Proteus petrol station in Philip Road the group's exponent, Farid Kassim, acknowledges the irony that, "in Saudi Arabia, if our members utter the 'Kh' of the word 'Khilafah', they are arrested", while "in this country, which has time after time tried to rupture the Islamic world, we work relatively freely".


Casualty of war . . . Gurbux Singh Virk of Punjabi newspaper Des Pardes with a picture of his murdered editor PHOTOGRAPH: SEAN SMITH

But when it comes to Islamic law, and jihad, holy war: "British law means nothing to us," says Kassim, a second-generation British-Iraqi. "When I look at what is around me, it does not belong to the Anglo-Saxons or John Major, but to God. I am not obliged to obey British law." Hizb ut-Tahrir has an "ideological" core, not a military one, he says, "but quite a few people come to us from the jihad-type of environment".

Until last month, passers-by on their way to Portobello market may have regarded Ali Mehmet Abuzeid's shop as just another Queensway halal butcher. But behind its now sealed facade, something dark was at work. Abuzeid, a Libyan, was cut to death with a knife, which the assassin, oddly, left behind. The killing was so crude that police sources suspect a political motive: Abuzeid had converted to radical Islam and had always been a vocal opponent of Colonel Gadafy's regime. He had recently switched from the moderate National Salvation Front to the more militant Jamma al Islamiya, a branch of the Muslim brotherhood.

THE same week, extradition charges were filed by France against an Algerian, Benouif Abdelkader, who was based in Ealing, west London, and had confessed to detonating 11 bombs against French and Algerian government targets. The combination of the Libyan and Algerian cases leaves the revolutionary Islamists of London confused as to whether they are the hunter or the prey. The British authorities are not sure which is more dangerous, the plotting exiles or the governments against which they conspire. "The British government", says Milad Hasadi of Jamma al Islamiya and a colleague of Abuzeid, "should worry more about the activities of the intelligence services of the Arab embassies in London than the opposition groups." Sure enough, last month, diplomat Khalifa Bazelya, the nearest the Libyans have to an ambassador in London, was expelled for "activities incompatible with his diplomatic status" — the usual code for terrorism or spying. Whitehall said there was no direct connection to Lockerbie or the Abuzeid murder but no one on the circuit believed it.

Nadir, of the Algerian Islamic Salvation Front, fears the activities of his own embassy more than those of the British police. He elects to meet not at his home but at the barrier of Ealing Broadway station, before adjourning to a café. Nadir was one of the men that Roger Le Loire, a French examining judge investigating Algerian terrorism, was eager to interview on a recent visit to London. Scotland Yard passed on Nadir's refusal to be introduced, saying he had not broken British law.

French authorities believe Nadir's group is raising funds to arm the Algerian mojahedin. But Nadir says his "brothers have all the guns they need", that he collects money for their families, "because in Algeria people have five or six children, like the Irish". For this, Nadir knows that the Algerian secret police are keeping tabs on him. The embassy refuses him a passport or travel document. Recently, a stranger filmed him distributing leaflets outside a mosque, then followed him "from Baker Street to Paddington". In all this, says Nadir, "the British police are the referee, a good referee. We respect them."

The Jihad, however, does have its foot soldiers in London. The Islamic Jihad organisation is not a party or a movement, so much as "an attitude, or state of being", explains Abdullah H. He does add, however, that Islamic Jihad has a structure, and its leader, Ramadan Shallah, was educated at Durham university.

The rendezvous with Abdullah, strikingly handsome in the standard-issue leather bomber jacket, is at the entrance to the ice rink and ten-pin bowling emporium off Bayswater Road. We walk through the bedsit-land of Paddington towards Edgware Road, "Little Arabia". Abdullah came from Egypt in 1986 to study petrochemical engineering in Aberdeen. He "joined" Islamic Jihad in 1991. "You do not really join, you make contacts. You are expected to protect your brothers within a network . . . I respect those who are soldiers engaged in acts of worship when they attack." Does he "attack"? "I would not tell you if I did."

From the roof of the Sri Guru Singh sports hall, or the Glassy Junction pub, there is a good view of the entrance to Des Pardes newspaper office in Southall. It was probably from one of these vantage points that the sniper fired the bullet which early last year killed the paper's editor, Tarsem Singh Purewal.

At an unnoticed session of the Hammersmith coroner's court last month, Purewal's death was decreed an "unlawful killing", making it the first recorded murder of a newspaper editor on British soil. Purewal was a leading exponent of Punjab (or "Khalistani") independence from India — and as such was popular in Southall's Sikh community, as well as being an acute irritant to the Indian government. Des Pardes had become the international pivot of the Punjab independence movement. Gurbux Singh Virk, his lifelong friend and deputy editor, now takes the helm. "I could die at any moment," he says calmly. "How do I know they will not come for me too?"

BUT WHO are "they"? Virk has what he calls "two theories, which are linked". The first is, logically, the Indian government, which "has said that if it can cut off money from abroad, the agitation in the Punjab can be buried. The money comes from solidarity. Des Pardes is the centre of that solidarity."

The second theory is the International Sikh Youth Federation. At the coroner's hearing, Virk, under court privilege, accused the federation — based in Smethwick, Birmingham — of a hand in the killing, after having received a phone call saying they had been involved.

Des Pardes had often published accusations that the youth federation was involved in massive embezzlement of millions of pounds of donations by worshippers at Sikh temples. A public feud had raged in print, with Des Pardes piling on what it called the evidence, and the Sikh Youth piling on the insults against Purewal — even after he had been murdered — along with its denials. Six members of the ISYF were detained by the police, all but one released. The view from Surinder Singh at ISYF headquarters is: "I don't know why people are using this question of the money to accuse us of killing the editor."

Back in Stoke Newington, at the Kurdish Halkavi Centre, Nafiz Bostanci can celebrate the fact that Sigdeniz was sentenced last month to 13 years for his part in the attempt on his life. "He drove the car and he was at the scene," says Bostanci.

The evening is just getting into gear along the strip in "Little Kurdistan"; the scent from the cafés and bakeries is enticing. Nevertheless, there seems to be a good case for a pint over the road at McGrath's Cead Mile Failte free house, a favourite old Irish Republican haunt. On television, Bill Clinton is telling the crowds that peace has broken out in Ulster.

Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

WHO FIRST realised the need for an international dateline, and what problems arose in its delineation?

THE NEED for an international dateline could have been recognised by any culture which knew the Earth was round, so the Greeks probably had some idea of it. But the oldest known reference is by Nicole Oresme, Bishop of Lisieux, in his Traitié de l'Espere of c1350. This describes three men, one circling the world eastward in 12 days, another westward in 12 days, and the third remaining at home. Oresme computes their effective day lengths. In his Quaestiones Supra Speram of c1355, Oresme says: "One ought to assign a definite place where a change of the name of the day would be made."

The phenomenon of gaining or losing a day became a popular puzzle question after Columbus's voyage. None the less, Magellan's crew were much perplexed when they got to Cape Verde in 1522 after three years at sea and a landing party was told: "It was Thursday, at which they were much amazed, for to us it was Wednesday, and we knew not how we had fallen into error."

The advent of railways and telegraphs led to the adoption of standard time, and then of time zones, from 1847, when the General Post Office adopted London Time throughout the UK. This culminated in 1883-1884 when the Rome and Washington Conferences adopted the Greenwich Prime Meridian and Greenwich Mean Time as international standards. This included the International Date Line as being at 180° east or west, with bends to separate US and Russian territory and to permit some South Pacific islands to have the same date as New Zealand.

Both the Philippines and Alaska crossed the Date Line. The Philippines had been colonised from the New World and hence were a day behind the adjacent Asian mainland, so they had to skip a day when they adjusted to the Asian week day. Alaska had been colonised from Russia, so it had both the Russian weekday and the Julian calendar. When purchased by the US in 1867, 12 days were dropped to convert to the Gregorian calendar, but then they were still a day ahead and had to have one eight-day week to harmonise with the rest of the New World. — *David Singmaster, London*

I WAS recently beset by flies from the moment I entered a local wood until I reached the other side, when they vanished. Were the same flies with me throughout, or do they work in relays?

IF THE questioner's walk was in the summer it is likely the irritating flies were *Hydrotaea irritans*, the sheep headfly. These are a pest of sheep, cattle, deer and ramblers, causing irritation which can result in injury, thus providing a blood meal for the maturation of eggs.

They are attracted to animals by carbon dioxide and visual clues. They do not bite, but will make use of a puncture already made by a biting fly, such as a cleg or horsefly.

Unless the flies received their blood meal and flew away satiated, it is likely that they stayed to the other side of the wood. — *Andy Berlyn, Penrith, Cumbria*

HOW LONG after the American Revolution and the War of 1812 did it take for Britain and the United States to become friends again?

THE distinction should first be made between friendship and alliance. The burning of the White House, and the Cotton Kings' support of the South in the Civil War, still rankle in Washington. The Americans may have been our allies, to their profit, in two world and numerous minor wars this century but they are not necessarily our friends. — *J S Bain, Stromness, Orkney*

THE WORD "tragedy" originates from the Greek words *tragos* (goat) + *oide* (song). How did the modern meaning evolve?

HAVE YOU heard a goat sing? — *Marcus Roome, Clapton, London*

GREEK tragedies were known as "goat-songs" because the prize in Athenian tragedy competitions was a live goat. These contests were sacred to Dionysos, one of whose animal incarnations was the goat. — *Susanna Roxman, Lund, Sweden*

I HAVE heard that if you go to the bottom of a very deep well and look at the sky you will see the star directly above, even in broad daylight. Is this true?

SOME 20 years ago a cliff-fall at Birling Gap, near Eastbourne, revealed a well dug by the Beaker people to serve a defensive settlement. At first the sea eroded just the bottom section, so one could look up the 300ft well. And indeed the sky was dark and the stars were visible. Further cliff falls destroyed the well. — *Roz Cullinan, London*

IN ITALY a fiasco is what you buy chianti in, so how did it acquire the English meaning which gets so much use nowadays?

THE WORD fiasco was first used and spread by the French writer Stendhal. The official etymology refers to the word "bottle" in a figurative meaning and is to be found in Italian actor's slang. The chapter "Des Fiasco" was removed from Stendhal's book De l'Amour but can be found in the 1853 edition. The reason for this was the sexual connotation of the Failure. — *Stéphanie Bully, Dijon, France*

I WOULD suggest that the consumption of a couple of fiascos would make this perfectly clear. — *Patrick Blanchard, Victoria, Australia*

IN ITALIAN a fiasco is a straw-covered round bottle. The figurative meaning — a flop, a failure — is also used in the Italian language, not just in English. Its origin can be traced back to the Venetian glass industry. If the glass-blower detects a flaw, it is called a fiasco, a common flask without pretences. — *Dr Piero Giorgi, Brisbane, Australia*

Any answers?

WHENCE came the Christmas cracker and its fancy hats and silly riddles? — *F Paul Taylor, Frodsham, Cheshire*

HAS there ever been a scientific study of astrology with regards to its ability or otherwise to define personal characteristics? — *Guy Evans, Derby*

WHAT is it that makes a song catchy? — *Mike Levon, Wakefield, Yorkshire*

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ

A Country Diary

Peter Squibb

PROVENCE: As very amateur but enthusiastic ex-Yorkshire bird watchers we were intrigued to discover which birds would visit our little plateau in northern Provence, covered with vines, cherries, apricots, truffle oaks and maquis.

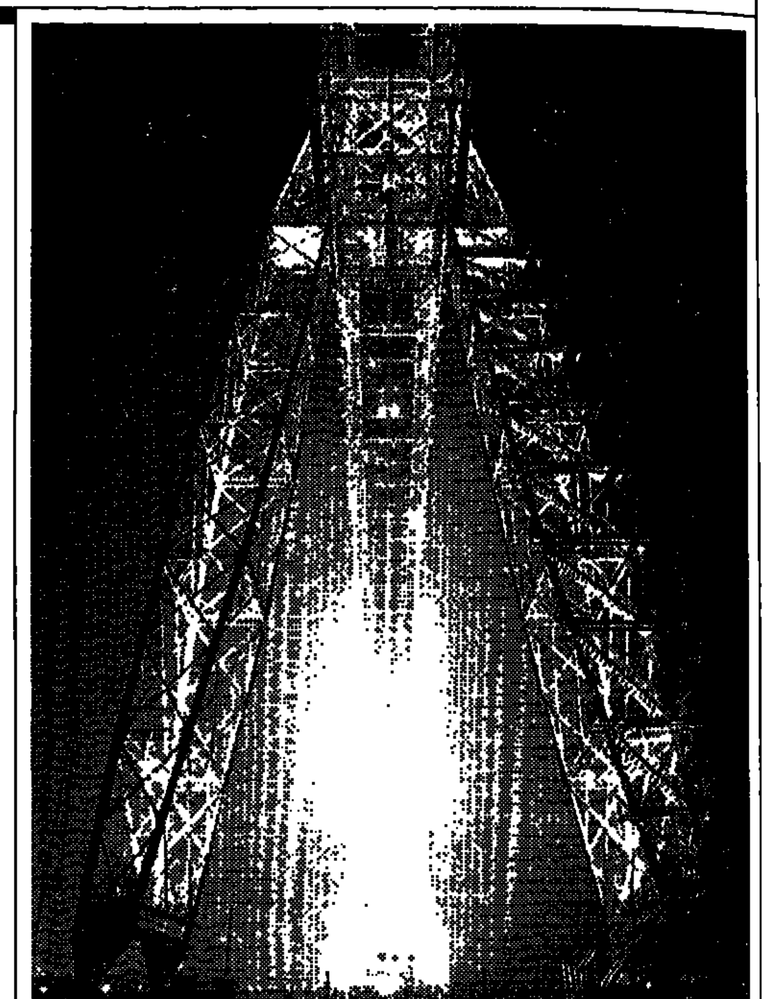
Most birds are migratory. Numerous tits — blue, great and coal — feed at the boxes together with mixed flocks of gold, chaff, and green finches. Siskins, serins, citrils and linnets peck busily between the vines, scattering regularly in alarm. Thrushes — song, mistle and rock — swoop silently in to roost in the woods. A solitary stork wings its way northwards. A Sardinian warbler has graced us with its secretive presence for three late autumns, co-habiting with the inevitable robin. Chattering long-tailed finches energetically search the pines. A tree creeper darts up a trunk, and a rare hoopoe flew over the road.

Each spring the nearby wood is full of nightingales enchanting the evenings and sometimes the mornings. When they go they are replaced by skylarks who sing every bit as beautifully as they used to sing on the moors between Keighley and Halifax.

In high, hot summer, birds are rare; after mid-day groups of bee-eaters flash their translucent-rainbow-triangular wings through the high or setting sun searching for insects, filling the air with their hollow echoing warbles. At evening they compete with the swallows and martins dissecting the sky. Several times in the burning afternoon a short-eared eagle has hovered overhead dangling its talons.

The residents are magpies, too many of them, some wandering rooks and pigeons, frequently darting jays, and an occasional flapping heron from the river. An owl nests each year in the nearby wood. Mewing, circling buzzards, singly, in pairs or family groups, drift by and there are occasional visits by red or black kites.

Surprisingly we have never seen a sparrow, nor a blackbird nor a starling, though many roost in town. There are wrens but not as numerous as they were in Yorkshire where, one freezing night, we counted 13 crowding into a tiny nesting box.



Lightening the load . . . Newport Transporter Bridge has reopened after a £3 million refurbishment. Cars are carried across the River Usk in a cradle suspended from the structure PHOTOGRAPH JEFF MORGAN

Letter from Brazil Mark Latham

All out for the season

THE CRICKET season has come again to Brasilia. As in England this coincides with the start of rainy weather but, here in Brasilia, the season unfortunately has nothing to do with bat and ball. The cricket in question is the cicada, which is now making its presence felt everywhere in the city.

Their noise is unbelievable. Brasilia as a city is surprisingly noisy. Even our select suburb of Lago Sul has a lot of noise from traffic, aeroplanes, dogs and, not least, people, so it took us a while, when we first arrived, to realise that a new noise was among us. I thought at first that a neighbour had installed a new kind of lawn sprinkler. This new "sprinkler", however, added a high-pitched musical whistling at the end of each cycle, whee-oo, whee-oo, an enchanting innovation which palled rapidly.

It was not until the full orchestra joined in that we realised that these were no less than the soloists of Brasilia' s free summer concert. The orchestra consists of millions of cicadas. Some very large trees have a whole orchestra of their own, while nearby trees stand strangely silent. Some neighbourhoods are deafening; in others you seem to have stepped through a sound-proof door.

The basic rhythm is disappointing, simply scritch-scratch, scritch-scratch. The euphony comes from the way in which different trees harmonise with each other, rising and falling in intensity, a whole tree falling abruptly silent and then starting again, as one, at some secret signal.

The leitmotif comes from the soloists, individual cicadas who stand out suddenly against the continuo with a magical range of trills, trolls and roundelays. Not, of course, to be mistaken for lawn sprinklers or intruder alarms.

Brasilia is a strange city, created some 35 years ago in the middle of this vast country to be a new capital inspiring development of the neglected interior. It has grown rapidly to a population of about 2 million, with more people pouring in all the time in the search for employment. But Brasilia remains more capital than city. While having outgrown the "Cemetery for the Living" obloquy, it remains different.

Everything was planned from the outset. There would be designated areas for government offices, accommodation, shopping centres, even for hotels. Nothing would be allowed to exist outside its intended location.

The problem is that it was really designed to be admired by planners, rather than for people to live in. Obviously so, since even its architects don't live here. It is for cars, not pedestrians; everywhere is too far away to walk. Its main avenue, the Eixo Monumental, is in the Guinness Book of Records as the widest street in the world, 500m from one end to the other.

Luckily it is inhabited by Brazilians, the most lively of all people. Their priority is to enjoy themselves, their world revolving around Carnival, football and either the beach or the *churrasco*, their barbecue. They have set about humanising Brasilia and undermining the mechanical functionalism. While they can, when required, be as industrious as the ant, their heart is obviously with the cricket, singing away its brief season in the fickle sunshine.

In a recent referendum, the citizens of Brasilia chose as their territorial emblem the Lobo do Guara, a native wolf in danger of extinction. A more representative symbol would be the vocal cicada.



Holloway: the grim inside story

Last month an inspection of Britain's largest prison for women was called off because of its appalling condition. A member of staff, who wishes to remain anonymous, reveals why to **Melanie McFadyean**

IT WAS a genuinely unannounced visit. Suddenly, at 10am on Monday morning, there were 20 inspectors in the jail. The governor, Janet King, wasn't even here and the deputy, Mike Ainsworth, was busy doing interviews. The news that they had arrived whipped round the jail in two hours, but at first nobody knew the full implications. The inspectors went into every nook and cranny — even into the store cupboards, toilets and unused rooms. They spoke to everybody — staff at all levels and prisoners, asking in-depth questions. It was soon clear that they were not impressed.

They came across as a very intelligent, experienced, professional group of people who were in a state of shock by the time I saw them. By then they had seen the filth in this place, the piles of rubbish and food under all the women's residential blocks, the left-over food the women are forced to throw out the windows through the bars.

They're locked up all the time. It's due to a lack of staff. All the women are supposed to get out every day, to work in the gardens, in education, or elsewhere in the prison; but now only essential workers get out, which basically means only the prisoners who work in the kitchens. Instead of eating their meals in the dining areas, the prisoners collect them and eat in their cells. They should get out an hour later to unload the trays, but there are many occasions when they don't get out again until the next morning so that the unwanted food remains in the cell until the next day. Prisoners throw it out of the windows to minimise the smell. There are some days when, owing to staff shortages, they don't even get out to collect their lunch — it is pushed into their cells through the hatch.

The prison service used to say that prisoners should maintain contact with outside agencies such as probation officers and people in education and training, but now they don't. There used to be about 20 women here going out to college; now there are none. If anybody does have to go out they are handcuffed.

I went on a long journey recently with perfectly safe prisoners who were in handcuffs all the time. When they went to the toilet you were allowed to unlock their hands but had to stand outside the door. An eight-month pregnant prisoner soiled her mattress recently and had to change it and move it herself. She slipped a disc doing so and was taken to hospital in handcuffs. A few weeks ago, a prisoner who had just come in and was known to be a suicide risk stuffed tissues up her nose and into her mouth and killed herself.

I'm not saying that that sort of thing doesn't happen anyway in jails, but one wonders whether if there had been more staff to supervise she would have been safer. Mothers with babies used to be given temporary leave to go home at Christmas, but this year none went out.

There are cockroaches everywhere; you hear them crawling about at night. The inspectors were out one night with cameras, presumably taking pictures of the bugs and the rats in the rubbish. I've often seen the rats — they're the size of cats and scuttle around in the drains and the holes made by building work. Every day as you walk into the building you see rat droppings inside and outside.

You can't blame the staff at any level — all they're doing is responding to Home Office policy, rules and regulations. Michael Howard [the Home Secretary] wants to make security the number one issue but that means other things suffer. If you have to spend more time doing urine testing, room- and strip-searching with the same or a reduced number of staff, then something else has to go. There are now 200 more women in the prison than there were three years ago and we have a smaller budget. Of course I agree with the need for security in a jail, but more searches haven't improved anything — it's no secret that there is still a big drug problem in prisons.

THE notion of dynamic security talked about in the Woolf report — that all people working in a prison should enjoy good relations for security to be effective — is out of the window: the staff don't have time. If prisoners are locked up 23 hours a day without a chance to wash, work or have any meaningful activity, they get very, very angry, which means the place is less secure anyway. This jail is usually simmering with anger. Its smooth running depends to some extent on prisoners warning staff of likely dangers or problems — but that only happens if relationships are trusting and have a chance to develop. Now we hear that the governor has been asked to say how she would cut the already low budget by another 15 per cent.

Men in jail get depressed and then blow, but women prisoners withdraw and turn on themselves. There's a lot more cutting up than there used to be, and both staff and prisoners are withdrawn. One of my colleagues left recently, even though she had no job to go to, because she couldn't stand it any longer; she cared about the women but wasn't able to look after them properly. A lot are trying to get transfers — but it's not just Holloway, all the jails are like this.

The medical department will come in for quite a lot of criticism I should imagine. Recently a diabetic prisoner went to get a needle and was told by medical staff that they couldn't find a new one, but that the one they had was probably the one she had used herself anyway that morning.

The medical department has very low morale — there are problems with its management structure, which again is the prison service's fault, and it is hugely overspent because there are so many more psychiatric cases — people who have been let down by care in the community programmes. The officers in the psychiatric wing are stretched beyond their limits.

The officers have had a system for years whereby they weren't paid for overtime but got time off in lieu. They aren't supposed to work more than 50 hours without getting that time back — it's called toil — but there are officers with 200 hours of toil docked up which, because of shortages, they can't take. I know officers who would never let the women down. So when you hear the phrase "overzealous, heavy-handed security", it's not our security that's overzealous and heavy-handed, it's the Home Secretary's.

This inspection is the best thing that's happened in this prison since I can remember. Until then we felt nobody cared about the rats and the lock-ups, and we believed that the Government was doing nothing because it was what they wanted — after all prisons minister Ann Widdecombe said they'd known about conditions in Holloway since July. It's all part of the general picture — the collapse of the NHS, of education, of transport — everything's falling apart.

I'd like to invite the Home Secretary in here for a night. Let him stay in a cell with a cockroach and a rat and wait to get out for a wash in the morning to find there's nobody to unlock your door so you can't. And then, if he is unlocked to go to work, he has the choice of missing work and losing his pay or getting a chance to have a shower.

If you treat people like animals, what can you expect? They will re-offend. I walk around this jail and, where once I saw all the prisoners out of the rooms on their daily "freeflow" — doing hairdressing, going to the gym, to education, to the gardens cleaning the wings, seeing their probation officers — now the corridors are silent. It's all going to rack and ruin. I often hear the sounds of distress, of crying and frustration. It's like going down a time tunnel into the Middle Ages.

Every day when you walk in you see the statement outside which tells you your duty is "to look after the prisoner with humanity and help them lead law-abiding and useful lives in custody and on their release". I could say something mild like fat chance, but frankly I look at it and think what a load of bollocks.

It's the meal thing

Let's do lunch? Darling, I thought you'd never ask. **Jonathan Freedland** on an American dating agency with a difference

HE LOOKS like Kevin Costner, she's the All-American Girl. He has Gorgeous Blue Eyes, she is Very Athletic. He is a Good Listener, she's Super Cute. And now they're about to have lunch.

Of course, they've never met, never spoken, never seen each other's photograph. All they have to go on are those tantalising nuggets of info from the dating agency that fixed them up. They only know the other's first name.

Still, they insist, they're not nervous. John, 27, says he meets new people all the time for his job, selling computer know-how. Rachelle, 26, says the fact that she bought new shoes hours before the date means nothing.

John and Rachelle are meeting courtesy of It's Just Lunch, the matchmaking service that seeks to take the blind panic out of blind dates. In a country in which No Commitment is a sales pitch, the agency seeks to lure and reassure potential clients all at the same time. Can't face the emotional investment of dinner? "It's just lunch," says Nancy Kirsch, who has just set up shop in Washington, DC. "It's like, everybody take a chill pill; you're not going down the aisle."



ILLUSTRATION: SALLY KINDBERG

"Lunchtime dates are less intimidating," promises the agency bumph, corporate motto: Life, Love and Dessert. "They have a built-in time constraint. A blind date can turn into the longest night of your life, but lunch is safe, with much less pressure — and no expectation of a goodnight kiss."

The reasoning is flawless. If you don't get on, it's only an hour. Just claim an urgent meeting and you're back in the office. If you like what you see, "exchange cards" and meet again. You don't have to think about what you wear, just stick with work clothes. For women, it's safer than arranging to meet a stranger in a darkened bar.

So far, It's Just Lunch have arranged 21,000 lunches in Chicago, New York and Washington, at a cost to the client of $600 for eight dates. They claim a 75 per cent success rate (measured by the number of second dates) and boast of 100 marriages and several births — proof that it's not always just lunch.

There are dangers, however. Kirsch urges her clients to stay away from spinach (it gets stuck in your teeth) and Mexican food (you might burp). Men say they don't like women who order a salad with light dressing: it seems "finnicky and neurotic". Women say they like a hearty appetite: "I want to see a guy who eats, because I want a guy!" Bad table manners have been cited more than once as the reason for no second encounter.

John and Rachelle have given this some thought. He will avoid pasta, "as you usually end up knocking it all over yourself". He will go for something small, so he is free to talk without a huge hunk of food growing cold in front of him. Rachelle, who circled skiing, fitness and social drinking on her list of interests, will avoid barbecue ribs or anything "you have to pick up with your fingers and end up smearing all over your face". She will not be ordering salad.

They don't know it yet, but they already have much in common. Both have worked so hard, they've let their social lives slip. Suddenly a lot of their friends are married, and they're running out of friends of friends to meet. "Now that I've achieved all my career goals, I'm ready for a serious relationship," Rachelle says. "My ultimate goal is a long-term relationship," John says. Both say the bar scene is not for them. "It's brutal," John says.

Nancy Kirsch has sympathy. She tends to a flock of singles who have lost their way. "I think people are so freaked out about dating, they don't know where to go any more."

The workplace used to be a reliable mating ground, but fear of an accusation of sexual harassment has made it out of bounds, especially in a politically hyper-conscious town like Washington. "This whole PC thing," Kirsch sighs. "No one can even say: 'Hello, you look nice today'."

Not everyone has the excuse of the US state department official who cancelled a date because of the outbreak of a foreign war. But most feel an hour in the middle of the day is all they can spare. So they tell their colleagues they're addressing a seminar on US budget policy and sneak into the It's Just Lunch HQ in downtown Washington. They fill out a questionnaire — appearance, ethnicity, attitude to children — have their picture taken and are interviewed by either Kirsch or partner Sharon Stevenson.

Applicants are sometimes rejected, like the man over 50 who wanted nobody over 30. He was told that times have changed. "Women these days are looking for a partner, not a meal ticket," Kirsch declares. "Besides, most women are making their own money." In that spirit, It's Just Lunch requires couples to split the bill, to avoid macho gestures and unseemly wrestling over the tip.

KIRSCH and Stevenson tolerate men who come clean and say It's Just Looks. But if his height-to-weight ratio is dodgy, he shouldn't expect Cindy Crawford. Women are more forgiving about weight, although they have demands, too. "They like tall and they want hair," Kirsch says.

John and Rachelle were put together in a matching session, in which Kirsch and Stevenson sat on the floor poring over their forms and linked Slim and Athletic with Loves Kids. No computers allowed.

John couldn't have been happier. Meeting Rachelle left him with a spring in his step, "smiling all day". Rachelle liked him back, although Kevin Costner isn't really her type. She prefers the JFK Jnr look. Still, they've arranged a second date. This time — yikes! — It's Actually Dinner.

Ding-dongs and a yo-ho-ho

CHRISTMAS TELEVISION
Nancy Banks-Smith

WHAT I want to know is what happened to the turkey? Pat had just bunged the big bird — there was a troubling family resemblance — into the oven when her long-lost husband, Frank, arrived back unexpectedly from the loony bin saying he had had a nervous breakdown. This turn of events was mercifully hidden from Arfer, who is having his own nervous breakdown in jail. (They try to look on the bright side in Wormwood Scrubs, and find Arfer depressing: "Miserable sod, ha, ha!")

The traditional *EastEnders* ding-dong was prolonged and acrimonious. Frank was frank ("I'm finding it 'ard not to 'ang one on your chin!") and everyone forgot the turkey. Oh God, it must still be there at gas mark 6.

Coronation Street was remarkable for being beautifully written by Julian Roache. Steve, of course, was arrested but when isn't he? The unique thing was Curly and Raquel's duet about the real uses of handkerchiefs. "Handkerchiefs are for keeping things in that you took off summat else that you meant to fix and you can't remember where it came from in the first place. Handkerchiefs are what your mam used to grab and spit into and scrub your face with when you'd been a mucky pup. Handkerchiefs are for polishing your glasses so you can see just how gorgeous your missus really is."

The chiming repetitions sounded for a moment like "On such a night as this . . ." from The Merchant Of Venice. Not many soaps remind you of Shakespeare. By the way, Christianity was mentioned. Now there's a first.

The thing I enjoyed most — it was the element of surprise — was *Treasure Island*. Would you seriously expect much from a Ken Russell frolic starring his wife? This was a yo-ho-ho and let's-do-the-show-right-here panto. It was something between the Good Old Days and Terrible Old Jokes. There were seven pirates, each a visible health hazard, a Ben Gunn who sounded disturbingly like Irene Handl, and the wife was just wonderful. Hetty Baynes played Long Jane Silver like every blonde who ever sent blondeness up like a rocket.

Her "Happy Birthday To You", a Marilyn Monroe spoof, in a thread-thin voice like a spider spinning silk, drew you in with a single hair. I bet it's a party piece. I bet they are good parties.

Christmas television is seldom surprising. Nor, for adults, is Christmas. The press weren't allowed to see *One Foot in the Grave* because, it was hinted, Victor Meldrew might die. He didn't, despite the best efforts of Melvin, a psychopath, and Edwin, a bird-eating spider. It's a fine series with a slightly uncertain future, though there seems plenty of mileage left in a man raging against the dying of the light.

Its ratings will have nibbled at the cheese on the other channel, *The Abbey* with Alan Bennett. His mum would be pleased to see the medieval history come in useful at last. Bennett drifts around like a cloud in brown boots, contemplating the Coronation Chair (and added lions) with a nice line in irony. "They needn't have bothered. The monarchy nowadays is so anxious not to be remote they could have dispensed with the lions and just put it on rockers." (You are distracted with the thought that a rocking chair would buck up the Queen's broadcast nicely.)

Tourists mill around Westminster Abbey as if waiting for trains which have been cancelled. You have to pick your station announcer with care. If I can't have Betjeman (and I can't) or Bennett then I'd like Belinda, an elegant lady waiting to see a wreath laid on Tennyson's grave and passing the time by passing judgment on the other poets. "Gerard Manley Hopkins . . . he was practically mad wasn't he? Henry James, *totally* mad at the end . . . thought he was Napoleon. Auden . . ." She lowered her clear, carrying voice. Auden, it was clear, could have given several batters a head start. "Eliot. I knew Eliot quite well and he was so boring."

True, madam, but the *wife* was mad. You do begin to wonder about the effect of the literary life. And, of course, who Napoleon thought he was.

Reinventing the classics

OBITUARY
Shura Cherkassky

SHURA CHERKASSKY, who has died aged 86, was often described as the last Romantic pianist, the standard-bearer of a virtuoso tradition which was essentially Russian and East European. He wasn't the first and won't be the last to be described in that way, yet for once the platitude — that he was unique and specially loved by his audiences — rings true.

Cherkassky was born in Odessa, the only child of professional parents: his father was a dentist, his mother a pianist. He was first taught by his mother, and after the family emigrated to the United States in 1923 had lessons with the great Polish-born pianist Josef Hofmann, who had been a pupil of the legendary Anton Rubinstein. Hofmann encouraged Cherkassky to give public recitals while still studying, which accounts, possibly, for Cherkassky's insatiable appetite for public appearances in later life. In his eighties he was still giving up to nine concerts a month on several continents. He loved travelling and the concert platform was his element.

He made his debut in Baltimore in 1923 and toured Australia, New Zealand and South Africa five years later, followed by concerts in France and England.

The turning point came just after the second world war when he accepted a date in Hamburg and was compared to Horowitz and Rachmaninov. His European reputation grew, and he made his base in Nice. Gradually he became well known in Britain and from his late fifties he rented a suite in the White House residential hotel near Regent's Park in London. "I prefer room service," he said.

Though Cherkassky was never short of concerto dates once his career flourished, conductors found him disconcerting because his interpretations were unpredictable. He admitted he would play one way in rehearsal, then do things quite differently in the concert. Spontaneity was the key to his fascination as an artist.

Cherkassky's technical prowess has often been remarked on, yet while he frequently played flamboyant works like Liszt's B minor Sonata and Hungarian Rhapsodies, he always seemed to play well within his capacity, never forcing his tone or trying to impress with noisy feats of athleticism. His sound had a sumptuous, cushioned quality. Melodies floated and details in inner parts would surface unexpectedly.

Cherkassky was not fond of recording in a studio, yet he warmed to Nimbus's policy of long takes, and his discography is substantial and representative of his entire range. His 80th birthday recital in Carnegie Hall (in reality his 82nd as for a long time he had knocked a couple of years off his age) was recorded live by Decca, which in 1994 and 1995 also brought out eight CDs of his other recitals; a ninth CD is due out this year.

Adrian Jack

Shura Cherkassky, pianist, born October 7, 1909; died December 27, 1995

Shoot to thrill

THEATRE
Michael Billington



Smack in the arm . . . drug-taking graphically depicted in Trainspotting PHOTOGRAPH: GERAINT LEWIS

THE MOST intriguing feature of Trainspotting, the Irvine Welsh novel adapted and directed by Harry Gibson at London's Ambassadors Theatre, is the audience: young, nattily clad and audibly enjoying this cult story of Edinburgh low-life.

Not having read Welsh's novel, I came to Gibson's version totally fresh, knowing only that it described the squalor and pain of the Edinburgh drug scene with a mixture of graphic realism and wild comedy. But, although we witness the agony of hero Mark's cold-turkey withdrawal from heroin addiction, the helpless dependence of his chum Tommy and the tragic cot-death of the baby of the equally addicted Alison, we learn almost nothing about the origins or the economics of the Edinburgh drug scene. Welsh and Gibson deal in consequences rather than in causes. Social ills have social causes and the play never explains why Edinburgh has a higher proportion of drug addicts and HIV cases than any other city in Britain.

Without that vital socio-political context what you get is a series of disjointed scenes and scatalogical set-pieces. I don't deny the linguistic virtuosity of the endless variations on skag and shag, shite and puke, but even that eventually begins to pall. Mark's opening description of trying to sneak out of his girlfriend's house with messed bedsheets is the foul-mouthed nineties equivalent of the cigarette-in-the-bedclothes scene in Lucky Jim. But by the time we get to a waitress's description of avenging herself on snotty-nosed customers by putting a used tampon in the tomato soup, it seems that youthful anarchy has simply turned into a desire to shock the grown-ups.

It is the tone of the stage version that worries me. And, if I found myself unable to join in the general hilarity, it was not so much out of physical as moral queasiness. The characters and their desperate plight demanded social exploration and compassionate understanding, but what I heard was an easy, self-gratifying laughter that accepted the inevitability of their situation. But, although I'm clearly in a minority of one, I admit that Gibson's production — the third already of what is clearly a cult phenomenon — has verve and that Mark Ireland, Peter Ireland, Gavin Marshall and Michelle Gomez play it with unnerving conviction.

Nearly 30 years after its premiere, which made Stoppard famous overnight, **Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead** is back at the National Theatre. And, even though I still feel that it over-extends a brilliant initial conceit, I readily admit that Matthew Francis's Lyttelton production with Simon Russell Beale and Adrian Scarborough is as exuberantly funny as any I have seen.

My doubts about the play are twofold. Stoppard, by focusing on a pair of attendant figures caught up in incomprehensible events at Elsinore, flies against the Shakespearean textual evidence that they are ex-friends of Hamlet specifically hired to spy on him. More seriously, while treating them as symbols of all humanity in that they are trapped in a meaningless universe with death as the only exit, Stoppard also makes them remorselessly self-conscious: I would feel more sympathy with their predicament if they themselves did not so endlessly define it.

Francis's production answers that objection in several ways: by dwelling on the speed and verve of the cross-talk; by highlighting the play's variety of texture; and by demolishing the stock image of Elsinore as a place of dark impenetrability. In Lez Brotherston's highly ingenious design, the two heroes find themselves surrounded by a windowed, transparent, conservatory-style structure behind which the torchlit politics of Hamlet proceed. It both creates a sense of two worlds and gives the play itself a physical lightness I've rarely known it to possess.

But it is the acting which is the evening's chief delight. And again Francis pushes to the limit the contrast between the ratiocinative Guildenstern and the slower-witted Rosencrantz. Simon Russell Beale, who simply gets better all the time, plays the former in college scarf and corduroys like some intellectual high-flier lumbered with a fidus Achates.

Meanwhile Adrian Scarborough, with beaky profile and close-cropped hair, touchingly suggests Rosencrantz is a likeable mutt who can never quite keep up with his Socratic friend: the one thing they share is a keen apprehension of death. Alan Howard, in Caroline spaniel-like black wig, also lends the Player King a wonderful mixture of actorish hauteur and moral seediness.

The unbearable Dutchness of being

Ed Vulliamy on the first exhibition of Vermeer's paintings for 300 years

JOHANNES VERMEER holds an inimitable place among painters. He commands an almost obsessive affection, from chocolate-box-tops to the deepest crannies of academe. He paints scenes from everyday life composed with disarming intimacy, which have become as familiar as the work of Van Gogh or Leonardo. Vermeer captures episodes that echo those in our own lives of which we are barely aware, but which, in these paintings, are sublimated and made poetic.

And yet, in Vermeer, things are rarely as they seem. Proust called him "the forever unknown". The first historian to establish his fame outside Holland, Theophile Thore, described him as the "Sphynx" among artists. Stylistically, he defies definition. His technical mastery baffles and intrigues. And perhaps most remarkable of all, this enigmatic fame derives from a minimal *oeuvre* of only 31 existing paintings, plus five contested attributions. They cover a narrow range of subject matter and most are very small in size.

The mystique becomes a universal query on the cool but passionate gaze from Girl With A Pearl Earring: what did Vermeer really paint, and why?

For 300 years it has been impossible to try to answer these questions without crossing frontiers and continents to visit Vermeer's few and scattered paintings. The last time a significant number of his works were assembled was for a posthumous auction in Amsterdam in 1696, when 21 were gathered for sale. But now the same number have been brought together by the Washington National Gallery for the first Vermeer exhibition, which comes home to The Hague in March, on the tercentenary of the Amsterdam auction.

The project has been propelled by one man, Arthur Wheelock, the Washington gallery's curator for Northern Baroque painting, but better described as "Mr Vermeer". Wheelock has worked since 1988 to assemble these paintings, and at the show's opening he displays the nervous excitement of a man whose wife is going into labour. The pivotal View Of Delft, from The Hague, was deemed unfit to travel, and released only after a special conference by experts from five countries. The exhibition only happened because insurance is underwritten by the government in America.

One of the most adventurous arrivals is the Lady Writing A Letter With Her Maid, from Dublin, just two years back from a seven-year excursion through the terrorist and drug-trafficking underworlds.

Vermeer's life is as opaque to the eyes of history as his painting. He was born in 1632, son of a publican in Delft. He himself became an innkeeper, married Catharina Bolnes in 1653 and later that year entered the painters' guild of St Luke. He had 11 children and died suddenly in 1675, aged only 42, having — we learn from his widow's deposition — "nothing of his own. He had lapsed into . . . decay and decadence".

Until this exhibition, Vermeer had been drawn from obscurity by two men. The first was the French critic and politician Thore, who, during the 1850s, stumbled upon the View Of Delft (which had gone on public display 30 years earlier) and the 1696 Amsterdam auction list. Entranced, he spent his 20 years of political exile tracing Vermeer's work.

More recently, a Yale economist, J M Montias, has written an archival thriller, charting Vermeer's and Catharina's extended families, and thereby fragments of his own life. It is a wonder that Vermeer survived on such a sparse output, in times when painters were notoriously prolific, churning out work with the help of large workshops. Montias calculates that Vermeer can have sold only two or three paintings a year.

This was the springtime of the Dutch nation, born out of a war of independence against Spain. Young Holland was self-conscious that it was the model of liberty, virtuous capitalism and northern nationhood. Vermeer shared this moral patriotism, as is clear from the bold maps that line the walls of many paintings. The View Of Delft proudly portrays his home town, and was described by Proust as "the most beautiful picture in the world".

It is fitting that Proust understood Vermeer's proud statement about Delft in this surreal manner. The cityscape is glorious but spectral and strange in the pale light of an unseen, timeless sun. In its resistance to absolutism — Catholic and Calvinist — Holland created an aperture for dichotomy and enigma as well as freedom. For Vermeer, such tensions were heightened — because he was a Protestant who converted to Catholicism in order to marry (his mother-in-law was a weighty Jesuit).

The best history book to be written for years, Simon Schama's Embarrassment Of Riches, opens with a fanfare: "It is the peculiar genius of the Dutch to seem, at the same time, familiar and incomprehensible." This is the essence of Vermeer and the dichotomy that emerges as we view, for the first time, an exhibition from Vermeer's *oeuvre*.

So what does Vermeer paint? He paints light. His hues, luminosity and shadows are extraordinary — he is one of the few artists to understand the transparency of shadow. In Vermeer, light creates mood, be it diffuse, direct or reflected, soft or lambent, cold and still or warmly radiant. In his vernacular scenes, Vermeer paints mainly women to whom men, if they are present, play a subsidiary role. He paints love letters and their recipients. He paints wine-drinking and music-making and women engaged in wholesome pursuits such as pouring milk or lace-making. Vermeer's realism is so accomplished that it is often called "photographic". That is the pleasing surface of things.

It is important what Vermeer does not paint. Time and time again, he takes a popular genre and removes the narrative context, leaving the central players in sparse surroundings, undefined by motivating events. This leaves the mood of a work as its dominant quality and frees the subject in time, if not in space.

Then there is the matter of illusion. Until the invention of photography, "the imitation of nature" assumed almost liturgical significance at various junctions in aesthetic theory. But among the Dutch this notion was elastic: nature and mathematics, once fully understood, could be worked on for effect. The theorist Sam van Hoogstraten wrote that the perfect painting was "like a mirror of Nature in which things that are not there appear to be there".



Detail from Girl With A Pearl Earring (1665-66)

The Music Lesson depicts a favourite subject which Vermeer strips of usual details; keyboard, playing hands or manuscript. He warps perspective to create a vast space surrounding the couple. Light falls selectively and illogically. Vermeer paints the pupil with her back to us, but the mirror above the virginal shows her face and also the leg of Vermeer's easel, which, of course, fails to appear in the scene itself.

THERE is one Vermeer map, in the Allegory Of Painting (unfortunately missing from this exhibition), which depicts not the seven provinces of the contemporary Dutch republic but — poignantly — the resplendent 17 of Renaissance times. Vermeer and the Renaissance: an intriguing but logical association, for Vermeer's technique, his mathematical trickery, the challenging stares, and spectral sense of mood have a predecessor: Piero della Francesca.

Almost alone among Renaissance painters, della Francesca paints those keen eyes that stare, challenge and spark a silent, inner conversation; the same hallmarks as Vermeer. Indeed, both artists seem to paint silence, there is barely any suggestion of sound. As we view the collection, there is more that links these two, thereby illuminating Vermeer's mystery.

Silence and the power of mood are also achieved by mathematics. The Renaissance masters turned geometry from a craft into the liberal arts of perspective and *disegno*. Della Francesca used mathematical constructions which speak to the subconscious to create strange, icy stillness in his didactic paintings. He composed illogical but impactful constructions, such as three different eye-levels in the Resurrection Of Christ.

There is no evidence that Vermeer went to Italy, and no evidence that he did not; some experts believe he trained there. But the influence of Italian masters blew at gale force across 17th century Dutch painting. And there is every indication that Vermeer was bewitched by the Italians' mathematical treatises and their applications to painting, optics and cartography. He used an Italian camera obscura device, which projected an image through a pin-hole.

Surveying the assembled work in Washington, one realises the degree to which Piero-esque trickery, using mathematics for thematic effect, is fundamental to Vermeer. But why? Slowly, a single theme emerges, in different ways, in different settings. The Woman Writing A Letter sits at her desk, set in an ingenious geometrical design: between three rectangular shapes, of which two are almost identical. The third, largest rectangle is an obscure painting-within-a-painting, reaching across the picture and finishing at the golden section. The woman looks up, straight at us. Her expression does not imply an unwelcome interruption. Everything in this painting — the business of her letter, her ermine jacket, a string of pearls — is subordinate to the moment, for which, in this instance, you are responsible. What this painting depicts is the moment itself.

In Woman Holding A Balance, Wheelock was first to observe, the Madonna-like figure is not weighing gold or pearls, as was presumed for centuries, but nothing. All that fills the scales are two drops of light (how fitting that one of Vermeer's most metaphysical paintings should involve weighing light). And the woman's pivotal significance is achieved by a vivid trick with light. She is bathed in an intense, illogical, crystalline light to dramatic compositional and thematic effect. Her demeanour is one of peace with herself which echoes the balance struck with the scales. There is an articulated religious analogy: the painting-within-a-painting depicts the Last Judgment, balancing the scales of divine justice. The woman's balance is an intimate echo of the Apocalypse, her own secular, temporal account of God's eternal judgment. So the most striking thing about this painting is the moment, in contrast to the scene on the wall that marks the end of time. The balance has just been struck. It could be disrupted by the slightest breath or movement. The woman's right hand with its stretched little finger is in a careful but fleeting position required to hold the balance, while the fingers of her right hand press sturdily on the table, suggesting permanence. The woman appears pregnant, throwing this painted moment forward into the future.

The scholarly Geographer wears academic attire and has around him the equipment he needs for measuring mankind's world — compasses, books, a globe. These things locate him in time and in proud Holland. But he has looked up from this place and from these things, distracted from within. By what? We do not know, but we sense that this has just happened at the moment of our "arrival", and this coincidence in time gives the painting its dynamism, not the apparatus of scholarship.

BUT WHAT about the Girl With A Pearl Earring, icon of the assembled work, brimful with contradictions? A series of questions occur: has she just turned her head towards us, anticlockwise, or is she about to turn away? Is our communion with this allusive figure about to commence or about to conclude? Is this mesmerising glance a greeting or a farewell? Her lucid eyes catch yours for a fleeting moment that seems to have lasted forever. The girl is at once defiant and vulnerable, sexual and chaste, simultaneously constituted of desire and confrontation. Already, the portrait is playing tricks with time. Does her half-open mouth mean that she is about to speak, or has spoken? The answer seems to be both, at the very same moment.

What is "a moment"? It is a measurement of the immeasurable, a unit of time. It was time itself that Piero was painting, an enterprise that marked him out from his own time. He is called the most "modern" of the old masters. By modern we usually mean timeless, and by timeless, we mean that he speaks to our time. And what better way to generate a sense of timelessness than by painting time itself.

In Vermeer, the enterprise recurs. The eternal is made of passing moments, and passing moments become eternal. Our lives are not built from a series of photographic snapshots without past or future. And nor are Vermeer's paintings. They are composed of counterpoint between the present, past and future, making them — in their way — more "life-like" than any photograph. The most remarkable of all the things that Vermeer paints is time itself.

The Vermeer Exhibition shows at the National Gallery, Washington DC, until February 11; and at the Mauritshuis, The Hague, from March 1-June 2. Tickets for the Mauritshuis must be booked for a specific date and time. Order forms from: Netherlands Board of Tourism, PO Box 523, London SW1E 6NT

She who reigns but does not rule . . . Two new books provide a layperson's guide to the constitution

Pain in the body politic

David Miliband

The Hidden Wiring: Unearthing the British Constitution
by Peter Hennessy
Gollancz 261pp £17.99

The Monarchy and the Constitution
by Vernon Bogdanor
Oxford: Clarendon Press 328pp £19.99

IT USED to be a standard family joke that no constitutional row would be complete without the appearance of Norman St John Stevas, now Lord St John of Fawsley, to re-assure the nation that all was well. Parliamentary mischief or royal mishap, Lord St John would be there, precedent at the ready, his unctuous loyalty representing the Panglossian school of constitutional commentary.

Today, however, this sort of constitutional scholarship won't wash. Blind defence of the status quo is out, the demand for political institutions to justify themselves very much in.

Politicians are ranked with journalists and estate agents when it comes to public trust. And there is a pervasive sense that our political structures do not produce good government. Far from being a diversion from real politics, political reform is now essential.

Peter Hennessy, journalist and constitutional scholar, is the Bob Woodward of the British constitution, searching after well-hidden truths at the heart of British government. Following his successful investigations of the Cabinet and Whitehall, Hennessy sets out to explain how the whole of our governing system fits together. He takes us through the five centres of power — monarchy, premiership, cabinet, Whitehall and Parliament. The result, he says, is a layperson's guide to the constitutional DNA.

What Hennessy describes is a political system struggling to function effectively. The Prime Minister, he says, needs to be a "grotesque composite freak" — the brains of Asquith, the dedication of Peel, the style of Macmillan and more — to do the job. Cabinet, Hennessy writes, is not able to play the decision-making role that the textbooks envisage.

Parliament, meanwhile, is scarcely able to reform itself, let alone check the executive. And, he says, the political role of the monarch is unclear — so much so that shortly before the 1992 election there was a desperate scramble to prepare for an inconclusive result. Only the civil service is given a clean-ish bill of health — and that remains demoralised, ground down by politicians who want their prejudices confirmed.

Hennessy cites, twice, Professor John Griffith's dictum that, in the UK, "the Constitution is what happens". Yet what happens is, on Hennessy's reading, driven far too much by events and far too little by strategy.

Difficult questions are avoided, relatively trivial ones dealt with. The urgent drives out the important. And still unresolved is the question of whether politics and politicians have the power to shape political structure to deliver policy, or whether, in fact, the system provides the rules, politics merely the players.

VERNON BOGDANOR, in The Monarchy And The Constitution, looks at one enduring part of this structure. He argues that constitutional monarchy provides the right framework for the safe conduct of democratic politics. His is not so much a work of extensive demystification — the press has in recent years more than taken care of that — as exhaustive explanation.

Dr Bogdanor has written a definitive treatment of the role of the British monarch, someone who, as he and Hennessy both put it, "reigns but does not rule". His book is part history and part political science, a veritable Erskine May of monarchical practice.

Given what Hennessy describes as "fluidity surrounding the bundle of custom, precedent and procedure at the very heart of the Constitution", it should be required reading for aspirant monarchs.

Bogdanor ranges comprehensively across the sovereign's functions. Rules of succession, relations with the church, finance and the civil list are all covered, as is the history of the monarch's relationship with the Commonwealth. Dogged readers will find that the smallest country of which the Queen is head of state is the South Pacific island of Tuvalu.

Bogdanor's case is that far from being merely the ceremonial part of the constitution identified by Bagehot a century ago, the constitutional monarchy is central to the efficient functioning of the unwritten constitution. "Constitutional monarchy is a form of government that ensures, not conservatism, but legitimacy . . . The fundamental case for constitutional monarchy is that, under it, the head of state is free of party ties."

Of course, says Bogdanor, the monarchy could be reformed. He thinks the ban on a Roman Catholic (or someone married to a Roman Catholic) occupying the throne offensive, wants the law of succession reformed to make it gender-neutral, and is sympathetic to the idea of a secularised monarchy.

He thinks the monarchy has always found the capacity to modernise. The imperial monarchy of Victoria was transformed into the family monarchy of the two most recent Georges. He now suggests a practical monarchy, using the power of symbolic position to further practical goals — standing up against social exclusion, for example.

Hennessy quotes R H Tawney to the effect that the UK accepted democracy as a convenience, like an improved telephone system. Bogdanor's thesis is that monarchy and democracy are natural allies, stability and change finely balanced to the benefit of all. It is therefore ironic that today both monarchy and politics face more pressure for change, and more popular scepticism, than at any time this century.

The "good chaps" theory of constitutional practice highlighted by Hennessy — the theory that people in power will do the right thing when the time comes — was not designed for an age where a former Master of the Rolls thinks the Home Secretary is behaving like a despot. Too many chaps have shown themselves not to be good at all. And in any case, what sort of way is that to run a country?

David Miliband is head of policy for Tony Blair

Against the odds

Ben Rogers

Women on the Margins: Three 17th-Century Lives
by Natalie Zemon Davis
Belknap/Harvard University Press
360pp £15.95

I INTERVIEWED Natalie Davis a year ago. She lives in Princeton but was in Oxford as a visiting professor. We talked about her early life as a leftwing activist, about the writing that has made her one of the most important social historians of her generation, and about her film work (she wrote The Return Of Martin Guerre). It struck me then that she talks in stories: a question about political correctness was answered with a flow of campus tales; another about film by way of some fairly detailed plot summaries. She is fluent and witty and listening to her can be a delight, but it is also slightly frustrating for anyone looking for easy answers. Much the same can be said about her new book.

Women On The Margins is the study of three 17th century "femmes fortes", at least two of whom were, like Davis herself, consummate storytellers. Taken together, she hopes they will reveal something about the opportunities and limits upon women of the period, but she is characteristically loath to draw any conclusions.

The first is Marie de L'Incarnation, founder and Mother Superior of the first Ursuline convent and school for girls in North America. She was born at Tours in 1599 and married off early to a silk-maker who died, leaving her with one son. In her widowhood she became subject to visions and recorded her ecstasies "in words of fire". She took on a spiritual director, slept on planks and lacerated herself with nettles. So far, there was perhaps not much to distinguish her from millions of others swept up by the Counter-Reformation. But Marie was far from typical. While her son was still a child, she abandoned the world for the newly formed Ursuline convent at Tours, where she rapidly discovered in herself remarkable skills as a teacher, linguist and writer.

The world of the convent proved too small for Marie and, as she describes in a memoir written near the end of her life, she formed a plan for converting the *femmes sauvages* of the New World. Despite opposition from many of her male superiors, she found wealthy backers for her scheme and soon was presiding over a convent and mission in Quebec. Where male missionaries remained contemptuous of Amerindians even after they had converted, Marie learnt Iroquoian and Algonquin, and took pleasure in conversing with her protégés, in many ways preferring them to the French.

Davis's second subject, Glikl, daughter of Judah Leib, had, like Marie, no formal education but nevertheless is the author of the first autobiography of a Jewish woman that has come down to us. She was born in Hamburg in 1646, married while still a child, and with her trader husband had 14 children of her own. After his early death, she set up a shop manufacturing stockings and trading in jewels and worked hard at finding suitable partners for her children. Her seven volumes of Yiddish autobiography are an unusual mixing of memoir and parable. Her concerns — class and religion — reveal a woman characteristic of her time and class. It is a chronicle of joys and sorrows, based around life and death, wealth and honour, exile and homecoming. Yet Davis finds something distinctive in the way Glikl uses story-telling to give meaning to her suffering and to remonstrate with God.

Davis's final woman, Maria Sibylla Merian, was the most independent of the three. She was an illustrator, born a year after Glikl, into a family of Lutheran artists in Frankfurt. By 13 she was already observing and drawing insects, and at 32, married with two children, she published her wonderful Transformation And Singular Flowerfood Of Caterpillars. Shortly after, she seems to have undergone some sort of religious conversion, left her husband and joined the ascetic commune of the Labadists. Unlike Marie de L'Incarnation, though, her zeal waned, and after five years she departed for Amsterdam, where she became a prominent teacher, artist and naturalist. In her fifties she made a brave and entirely unconventional expedition to the Dutch colony of Surinam, where she spent two years discovering, breeding and recording its plants and insects. Returning to Amsterdam, she published the beautifully-illustrated Metamorphosis Of The Insects Of Suriname. Her way of depicting plants and insects was singular, and, Davis suggests, owed something to her sex: where her male contemporaries saw specimens in isolation, Merian depicted animals in their natural habitat and followed them through their life cycle.

HER BOOK on Surinam also subtly questioned the assumptions on which European colonisation rested — she listened to the native populations, and implicitly criticised the conditions of slaves. Her vision was ecological and ethnographic.

Davis's finely wrought book works as a triptych; each life is closely observed, but thrown into relief by its relation to the others. Where Marie de L'Incarnation's minimised the differences between herself and the Amerindians, Merian was sensitive to their peculiarity; Glikl identified with her family, Marie experienced hers as a burden; Merian's faith waned, Glikl's remained steady.

But there were affinities, too. At the most fundamental level, all three were determined women who asserted the self "against what life had meted out"; all three were summoned, in true 17th century fashion, "by sudden spiritual openings". Above all, they were open to the stories other people tell about themselves, and ignored established literary and artistic genres in favour of unorthodox hybrids.

These traits are also the leading features of Davis's own work, and there is a sense in which each of the lives she describes has something of Davis in it. After a while you realise she is offering them as models — or even vindications — of the sort of close observation and story-telling that is her trademark.

Omelette in the Hegel Café

Jenny Turner

The Curious Enlightenment of Professor Caritas
by Steven Lukes
Verso 261pp £14.95

STEVEN LUKES has, for many years, been one of Britain's top left-liberal political philosophers. Usually, he writes sober, historical studies of rationality and relativism, Marxism and morality, all the big left-liberal political theory themes. And yet, the man has now published his first novel — and it has a talking owl in it.

A middle-aged, liberal historian wakes up one morning to find himself arrested by the secret police. His crime? The military junta has identified him as a propagandist in the cause of Optimism, the evil ideology which says there is always a point to struggling on. And the guerrillas of the sinister Visible Hand have identified Caritas as a likely subversive too. "You are responsible for our Optimism, yet you never took that responsibility seriously. You gave us hope, but you never thought it part of your task to see whether that hope was justified," mutters one of them as he springs his former lecturer from jail.

Under cover of the name Pangloss, Caritas is to travel to as many different political régimes as he may find. Wherever he visits, be it Utilitaria or Communitaria, Libertaria or the Atlantis-like Egalitaria, he is to report on the state of the social fabric he finds there. Does Caritas take on his role impersonally? Not a bit of it. Even as he is flying from university to university, like a refugee from a Malcolm Bradbury bagatelle, Caritas knows that his beloved son is risking his life with the Hand. Even his daughter, whose only crime is to be an active defender of the most minimal human rights, has been forced into hiding on pain of torture and death.

Readers will have noticed by now the odd Enlightenment in-joke creeping in. There is that neat reversal of Voltaire, and the even nicer one of Adam Smith's old Invisible Hand — supposedly keeping the most chaotic of economies all spruce and sorted out. The talking owl is discovered in the shabby township of Minerva, just after Caritas has eaten an omelette at the downbeat Hegel Café . . . Such in-jokes may convey two important surprises to a reader who knows about political philosophy only in its dreary contemporary form. They suggest that great philosophy has much to do with images, of which that darned owl is only the most beautiful. And they suggest that political theory is a thing to take pleasure in, quite friendly enough a canon to enjoy the odd dig in the ribs.

At the beginning of his adventures, Caritas is sitting in his cell, conducting an imaginary chat with Kant. "Enlightenment," says Kant, "is man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity. The motto of enlightenment is: Have the courage to use your own understanding!" If Lukes makes Kant sound as bracing as a present-day cognitive-behaviour therapist, that's because much of what is most wise about psychotherapy comes from Kant in the first place. And that's why Kant, heaven knows how many ostensible philosophical revolutions later, is still Public Friend Number One in Lukes's comedy of ideas.

Public Friend Number Two? That vision of the total connectedness of all human endeavour, heralded by Hegel's squinty-faced owl. But what sort of people does Caritas find there, between Kant and Hegel, to help him on his way? In the hideously right-on Communitaria, it is a bunch of nihilistic students who hide out in their college study-bedrooms, there to claim their freedom not to belong to anything if they don't want to. In the horribly familiar free-market hell of Libertaria, it's a group of troubled souls who have been thrown out of their psychiatric beds. And then, on his journey towards the future, our footsore professor is much heartened by the sight of a bunch of nouveaux hippies hanging out in the trees.

In this book, however, the refuseniks no longer find themselves stranded on their own. A kindly and cultured old gentleman has come along to argue things out with them as they go on life's way. Call it education, call it dialectic, call it a solid belief in the importance of testing ideas across the boundaries of generation and social class. Such are the Enlightenment values at the core of Steven Lukes's thinking. And such is the delightfully edifying comedy that this novel is all about.

Saying it with feeling

Alex Clark

Women
by Fay Weldon
HarperCollins 288pp £9.99

***IN THE* first story in this collection of 16, father and daughter spar on the telephone. The daughter is contemplating a sex change to better connect with her lesbian lover, who used to be a man.**

"Wouldn't it have been simpler to both stay the way you started out?" asks the bemused father. His daughter is understandably dismissive: "Simplicity is not the object of the exercise." Neither is it the object of the story itself, which contains an ageing nuclear scientist, a manipulative New Age journalist called Weena, two sets of mothers and daughters, gender confusion, various sexual couplings and the mysterious plutonium-like substance, Red Mercury.

Weena is a character in H G Wells's The Time Machine, one of the peaceable Eloi who are harvested by the evil subterranean Morlocks, both races standing as a metaphor for a divided world. In Weldon's schematic world, the two races are generally men and women, so it is surely ironic that this Weena is the dangerous force, the woman who sets herself against other women. Significant, too, that the scientist regards her as less toxic than she really is: "So little strontium in her bones!", the implication being that stupidity, wilful or otherwise, is the necessary condition for destructiveness to flourish.

Weldon is at her best when she allows herself an elaborate framework in which to work out her concerns. Elsewhere, she has asked what we want of fiction if not to explain the world, and the least successful of these pieces are too fragmentary and oblique to explain anything of consequence.

Although Weena is definitely a wicked woman, men are still the villains in most of the stories, revenge still a dominant emotion: in "Leda and the Swan" a man regarded as a natural swimmer threatens suicide when his wife makes the Olympic team; a smug civil servant hosts the local Women's Liberation Group while his wife is in labour upstairs, an experience universalised and historicised by its title, "Pains, A Story of Most Contemporary Women, 1972"; throughout, men commit adultery and coerce and blackmail and betray the marital home.

Compared with therapists, however, men are angels. The last section of the book, entitled "Going to the Therapist", reprises the theme, introducing a home-wrecking quack figured as Santa Claus and, fittingly, denounced by the family's youngest child, and the ghoulish figure of the Pardoner, who demands vast sums of money in return for implanting false memory into the mind of a neurotic young woman. The therapist is always female, repressive and given to banal generalisation, her patients somehow unable to see through her. As polemic, it lacks subtlety; sheer strength of feeling carries the day at the crucial moment, but can seem oddly redundant after the event.

Regrets, I've had a few: Frank Sinatra with Shirley MacLaine

Ring-a-ding time

Chris Petit

My Lucky Stars
by Shirley MacLaine
Bantam 319pp £16.99

Looking for Gatsby: My Life
by Faye Dunaway,
with Betsy Sharkey
HarperCollins 416pp £16.99

ONE of the best lines of the year turns up in Shirley MacLaine's affectionate but exasperated portrait, in My Lucky Stars, of Robert Mitchum, with whom she had an affair. She used to enjoy asking him the time, she says, just to get a straight answer.

MacLaine is shrewd and frank on the subject of acting and its "tyranny of insecurity", which produces a breed that is narcissistic beyond belief, yet afraid of the mirror. Such anxious self-regard makes sincerity a problem and any actress plays games of emotional brinkmanship with her leading man. MacLaine is unsparing on her own humiliations, which include learning that her affair with Yves Montand was the result of a bet between Montand and her husband.

On-set vignettes reveal a smart grasp of the dark currents of film making, an essentially raw and predatory process, as shown by her account of how she and two other stars rounded on a director after sensing his weakness and went for the jugular. An on-set row turned into a pointless two-and-a-half hour quarrel about a move that had to do with looking out of the window, until "our own exhaustion finally wore us down and now I can't even remember if we looked out of the window or not." It is a shame that MacLaine's observations are wasted on this lucky dip into her variable career. She is sharp when it comes to her friendship with Sinatra and the late Dean Martin and confirms Martin as true Menefreghista — loosely meaning someone who couldn't care less. At his peak Martin could have had anything or anyone; yet, for all his apparent gregariousness, he preferred to drink alone with the TV. He once admonished Sinatra in MacLaine's presence for beating up a waiter while he was trying to watch television.

When touring for the last time, as old men, Sinatra still insisted on ring-a-ding time after the show, but Martin slipped quietly away, no longer bothered with his previous excuse that he had "a broad waiting". MacLaine writes movingly of Martin's slow fade and his enigma.

She is cannier than most on Mitchum, another passive, complex man. "If Hollywood was Atlantis," she writes, "Robert Mitchum was from Venus. He demanded nothing. He had no desires, not in relation to food, an evening out or an evening in." Once, on a dirty weekend in London, they bumped into Faye Dunaway and Marcello Mastroianni doing the same. The encounter is not in Dunaway's Looking For Gatsby, which is far more guarded than MacLaine's book, and too often comes across as a tick-list of achievements — marry rock star, have affair with international film star, win Oscar, have child.

Dunaway's ambition and seriousness were never in doubt — compared with MacLaine, she appears driven. Her problem was always to what extent was she a fashion plate or real actress, in spite of the patronage of directors like Elia Kazan. If it took a malignant Roman Polanski to drag a great performance out of her in Chinatown, she fails to recognise that his antipathy channelled her acting. Too often, she has looked distracted on screen or settled for being an old-fashioned style star lending herself to unworthy projects.

These forlorn memoirs read as though Dunaway has listened to "Where Do You Go To My Lovely" once too often: "I would have to say that I have never really been to Florence, though I have been through it hundreds of times in a Ferrari." Her descriptions of the insulation of fame — first-class travel, interior designers, drama coaches and shrinks — suggest that, whatever the rewards, the price isn't worth it.


ILLUSTRATION: BARRY LARKING

Imagination grows wild

Paul Evans

THE WOODS are cold and wet — stark branches against a milky sky. Without the leaves, some think of these woods as dead, or else biding until the spring awakening, spellbound. But as I walk between the trees, I feel the woods are most alive. The veil has fallen, revealing their naked wilderness.

Wilderness is beyond human governance. It is that potential of nature which carries significance from the past to the future. On the fresh snow, footprints appear and vanish. But some are missing. Spoor that belong to the spirit of these woods will never mark the snow and may only be tracked in the far reaches of the imagination.

They say you can't miss what you never had. But I've never been convinced of this. I miss the steam rising from a "sounding" of wild boar, their razor-backs huddled together in the frozen dawn of winter woods. I miss the slap of beaver's tail on willow ponds. I miss the solstice howl of wolves on the longest night, calling from the dark blood of history into the empty, echoing new year. And yet I have no memory of these animals. They were all wiped out in Britain centuries ago.

It is fashionable now to close the gap between nature and human culture — "they are, in fact, indivisible," writes Simon Schama in Landscape And Memory. He claims the landscapes which mean so much to European culture are "built up as much from strata of memory as from layers of rock". The problem with this is that the strata of memory are broken. There are great fissures of forgetfulness. We remember what we last remembered, even if that was false.

Our culture emerged from nature, but it emerged, fearfully, in opposition to it. The loss of boar, beaver, bear and wolf from the woods I walk are testament to that.

The escalating loss of wildlife and habitats from the world has not been prevented by the cherished memories of European culture for nature; in fact, they may have been hastened by it. How do we tell the Ogoni people of the Niger delta that their lands, destroyed by European companies, are any less important than these? Double standards make the "indivisibility" of nature and culture at best wishful thinking, at worst a horrible lie.

To know that there are forests elsewhere in the world that have not lost their megafauna (yet) only makes the loss here more poignant. To have lived and worked in the forests of New England showed me how possible it is for the forests themselves to return. In Old England, only 10 per cent of the forest remains — tattered fragments besieged by urban development, agriculture and intensive forestry; hacked up by roads; and messed about by well-intentioned but intrusive "management".

Conservationists are negotiating to "give nature space". Around the world there is debate and innovation precipitated from ideas shifting around the notions of wilderness and ecosystem restoration. Conservationists negotiate between various interest groups for an outcome which favours the "natural". But what is this "natural" and can we really replace that which we've lost? The past itself is lost to us. Memory is fearful of the shadows gliding through the trees, leaving no mark.

There is another meaning of "negotiation" — and this is to find our way. To find our way in the world, to find our way in nature requires more than the critical debate quarried from science and aesthetics. It requires imagination — that place where we confront our fears of nature. "Tyger! Tyger! burning bright, In the forests of the night," wrote William Blake. To Blake, "nature is imagination".

A few years ago the remains of a mammoth was unearthed in a gravel pit just a few miles from these woods. Recently the fossilised skeleton of a giant elephant, far bigger than an African elephant, was discovered in the Norfolk dunes. Although we have no memory of these great animals, can't we feel their shuddering footfalls, their crashing through the trees? These woods are places where the imagination grows — an imagination where wilderness flourishes — where it reaches out, leading us into the future.

Chess Leonard Barden

ANATOLY KARPOV has been writing about super-miniatures — decisive games of 12 moves or fewer, played by the world champions. They include one of Karpov's most embarrassing moments, against Larry Christiansen at Wijk 1993, where his attempted opening improvement at move 11 led to his resignation one turn later: **1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nf3 b6 4 a3 Ba6 5 Qc2 Bb7 6 Nc3 c5 7 e4 cxd4 8 Nxd4 Nc6 9 Nxc6 Bxc6 10 Bf4 Nh5 11 Be3 Bd6?? 12 Qd1 Resigns.**

Recounting this defeat in the German magazine Europa-Rochade also enabled Karpov to underline his own resilience: he recovered to win first prize at Wijk, just as Spain's Illescas did after losing in 12 in last month's game at Linares.

None of the 21 world champion super-miniatures that were listed by Karpov compares in quality with Sadler's win over Illescas, but they do include another of the rare coincidences — two decisive games of significant length being exact duplicates — that I discussed here on December 17:

Alekhine v Nenarokov, Tchigorin Defence, Moscow 1907

1 d4 d5 2 c4 Nc6 3 cxd5 Qxd5 4 Nf3 Bg4? An early mistake. Best is e5 5 Nc3 Bb4. **5 Nc3 Qa5 6 d5! 0-0-0 7 Bd2 Bxf3 8 exf3 Nb4** Black hopes simply to win the d5 pawn. **9 a3! Nxd5 10 Na4! Resigns.** Black's queen is trapped. Remarkably, this same trap was also sprung by Tolush against Aronson at Leningrad 1965.

Vladimir Kramnik, the most successful tournament player of 1995, shared first prize at Belgrade in November in an event where Britain's Michael Adams recovered well from a poor start: Gelfand and Kramnik scored 8/11, Shirov 6.5, Topalov 6, Adams, Ivanchuk and Timman 5.5, Leko 5, Ljubojevic 4.5, Belyavsky and Lautier 4, Miladinovic 3.5.

Belgrade's final round brought yet another miniature, where Kramnik blows down Black's solid pawn stonewall at d5 and f5:

Vladimir Kramnik-Alex Belyavsky, Reti Opening

1 Nf3 d5 2 g3 c6 3 Bg2 Bg4 4 0-0 Nd7 5 d4 e6 6 Nbd2 f5?! A dubious idea in association with Bg4, but it takes superb play to prove it.

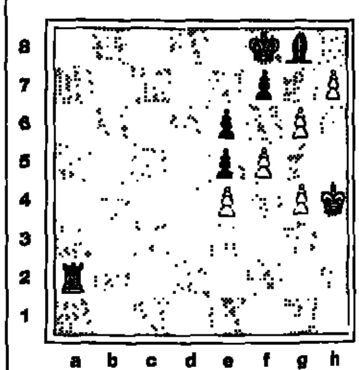
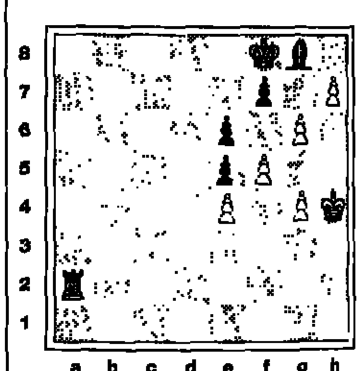
7 c4 Bd6 8 Qb3 Rb8 9 Re1 Nh6 10 cxd5 cxd5 11 h3 Bh5 12 e4!! The very move the stonewall was designed to prevent.

fxe4 13 Ng5! Bf7 If Qxg5 14 Nxe4 Qe7 15 Bg5 Qf8 16 Qxd5! exd5 17 Nxd6 mate.

14 Ndxe4! dxe4 15 Nxe6 Bxe6 16 Qxe6+ Qe7 17 Rxe4 Kd8 The exchange of queens fails to save Black: Qxe6 18 Rxe6+ Be7 19 Bxh6 Kf7 (gxh6 20 Rae1) 20 Bd5 Nf6 21 Bb3 gxh6 22 Rae1 wins quickly.

18 Qd5 Resigns. Slightly premature, but if Qf8 19 Bg5+ Nf6 20 Re6 Kd7 21 Rae1 followed by h4 and Bh3 with decisive threats.

No 2402

White to move; what should be the result? White's pawn chain looks impressive, but Black is two pieces up.

No 2401: 1 Kb1. If Bc3 2 Rf4, or Bg3 2 Rd4, or h2 2 Bxg2, or Nh7 2 Qg6. The key is explained by the tries 1 Rd1? Nf4 and 1 Rf1? Nd4 when 2 Rxf4(d4)?! leaves White's king in check.

Quick crossword no. 295

Across

1 Hush! (5,6)
9 Not seen (9)
10 Regret — an evergreen (3)
11 Shinbone (5)
13 Conveyed between banks (7)
14 Merry-making (6)
15 End of pain (6)
18 One legally holding another's property (7)
20 Purchaser (5)
21 Old name for newt (3)
22 I'm real bad (anagram) (9)
24 Tall spiky, garden plant (3-3,5)

Down

2 Large tea container (3)
3 Competitor (7)
4 Make calm (6)
5 Arctic duck (5)
6 Submissiveness (9)
7 Assembled (3,8)
8 Tired — anticipating retirement! (5,3,3)
12 Small brick (9)
16 Ban (7)
17 Head protector (6)
19 Train — coach (5)
23 Run not scored by batsman (3)

Last week's solution

Bridge Zia Mahmood

ONE OF the reasons I love the game of bridge is that there are no absolutely right answers to anything. Bridge is not a game that can be played mechanically, according to a series of rules. You have to use not only your brain and your memory but your imagination and your creative spark to avoid the traps that lurk in even the simplest position.

To show you what I mean, here is a deal from the recent invitation teams event at the Roehampton Club. This tournament gives the ordinary club player a chance to pit his wits against teams of experts in a friendly contest that is both a serious competition and a great social event.

	North	
	♠A9832 ♥QJ64 ♦A ♣932	
West ♠1076 ♥92 ♦10864 ♣AQ106		**East** ♠J54 ♥A1087 ♦KQ ♣J875
	South ♠KQ ♥K53 ♦J97532 ♣K4	

Your problem is a simple one: with ♣932 in dummy and ♣K4 in your hand, which card should you play on the lead of a low club from your right-hand opponent?

A machine would play the king. So would a man who plays with his head and not his heart, for he will tell you that playing the king will win a trick half the time and not matter the other half. But sometimes you have to throw away the percentage tables and listen to your imagination. Love all, dealer South (see table below left).

North-South were experts, but you would not have thought so from the bidding, because they arrived in a precarious three diamonds. West led the nine of hearts, which East ducked. South won with the king, cashed the king and queen of spades, led a low diamond to dummy and cashed the ace of spades to discard a heart. A fourth spade was led from dummy, on which South threw his last heart as West ruffed with the six of diamonds. West played a heart to the six and ten.

South ruffed and led a low diamond to East's queen, arriving at this position having lost two tricks (see table above right). If East had played a heart, South would have

	North	
	♠None ♥QJ ♦None ♣932	
West ♠None ♥None ♦10 ♣AQ106		**East** ♠None ♥A8 ♦None ♣J87
	South ♠None ♥None ♦J97 ♣K4	

ruffed. West could overruff, but would then have to let South's king of clubs score the ninth trick. So East correctly led a low club, and South correctly played low! West could win with the ten and cash the ace, but that was all. If South had played the king of clubs, West could have won with the ace, led a low club to East's jack, and scored the ten of diamonds on East's heart lead.

Of course, East might have beaten the contract by winning the ace of hearts at the first trick and playing a club, while South could have discarded clubs rather than hearts on dummy's spades. But that would have been soulless, mechanical play. ©

Sports Diary Shiv Sharma

Shearer haulmark

ALAN SHEARER became the first footballer to score 100 Premiership goals when he netted against Tottenham Hotspur at Ewood Park at the weekend, condemning the London side to their first away defeat of the season.

The Blackburn frontman has scored in every one of Rovers' Premiership home games so far this season. He adds a further 19 European and domestic competition goals to his tally for a total of 119 goals since 1992. Shearer's nearest Premiership challenger is Les Ferdinand of Newcastle, with 78 goals.

Rovers' manager, Ray Harford, said: "Alan is a true role model for everybody, not just footballers, because he behaves so admirably and his 100 goals are remarkable. Don't forget he missed a whole season because of a terrible injury and still he has done this."

Shearer: a ton of goals

GEORGE WEAH, AC Milan's 29-year-old Liberian striker, has been named Europe's top footballer. He was presented in Paris with the prestigious Golden Ball award for 1995 — the first year non-European players have been eligible for the honour. Germany's Jürgen Klinsmann was second and Finland's Jari Litmanen came third.

JACK CHARLTON stepped down as manager of the Republic of Ireland after 10 years in the hot seat. His decision to go followed the country's failure to reach the European Championship finals in England this year. During his time in charge, Charlton turned Ireland into one of the top sides in world football, leading them to the World Cup quarter-finals in 1990, and they lost only 17 of the 93 matches they played with him at the helm.

FAI president Louis Kilcoyne said the Irish people should be grateful to Charlton for his achievements as Irish manager. "Jack has steered our team to levels of success never before achieved and he helped to expose the game into every corner of Ireland," he said. "We owe Jack a huge debt of gratitude for all he has done for football in this country in the last 10 years."

THE BBC, which recently lost the FA Cup and Grand Prix motor-racing to its TV rivals, faces a serious threat to the jewel in its sporting crown, the Olympic Games. Rupert Murdoch is negotiating to take the Games in a £200 million bid that could see the event disappear from British terrestrial television in 2000.

The head of BSkyB, Sam Chisholm, met the organisers of the Sydney Olympics in Australia with a view to capturing the European television rights. If Murdoch obtains the rights he will be able to sell them on to the highest bidder in each European country. That would mean his own Sky Sports channel winning in Britain.

NEW ZEALAND cricketers, who have had a terrible season, will go into the World Cup fray on the Indian sub-continent having had their faith in their own abilities restored after leaving their best performance in the one-day series against Pakistan till last. They beat the visitors by 32 runs in the final encounter at Eden Park, Auckland, to square the series 2-2. The home side made 244 for eight, with valuable contributions from Craig Spearman (48), Adam Parore (42) and Roger Twose (41). Despite the best efforts of Salim Malik, who plundered 58 off 52 balls for the tourists, Pakistan were all out for 212.

DESPITE a gallant knock of 143 by Asanka Gurusinha, Sri Lanka's left-handed No 3, Australia defeated the visitors by 10 wickets in the second Test at Melbourne and won the series. Scores: Australia 500 for 6 declared and 41 without loss; Sri Lanka 233 and 307.

ENGLAND will break new ground this year when they undertake their first cricket tour of Zimbabwe. The tour, which will be followed by a visit to New Zealand, will run from November 30 to January 3. It will include two Tests — the first between the two countries — and three one-day internationals. The England tour will mean that Zimbabwe will have hosted all the Test-playing nations except Australia and West Indies.

GARY KASPAROV, world's No 1 chess player for 10 years with hardly a break, has been toppled from his perch — by his own protégé. Top place on this month's International Chess Federation list goes to Vladimir Kramnik, a 20-year-old Muscovite. The federation's official figures give Kramnik and Kasparov 2,775 points, with Anatoly Karpov third on 2,770. Kramnik is placed first because he has played more games than Kasparov.

NIGERIA have pulled out of this month's African Nations Football Cup in South Africa because of fears for the safety of their players following last November's hanging of nine minority rights activists in defiance of an international outcry. Jim Nwobodo, the sports minister, claimed threats which "bordered on life and death" had been received.

MICHAEL JUNG, a 29-year-old German who threatened to kill Boris Becker and his family in a bizarre extortion case, was convicted by a Munich court and given a suspended two-year sentence. He was also ordered to undergo psychiatric treatment. The court accepted Jung's statement that he never intended to carry out his threats.

Football Premiership: Tottenham Hotspur 4 Manchester United 1

Armstrong stalls United challenge

David Lacey

MANCHESTER UNITED'S pursuit of Newcastle at the top of the Premier League stalled on Monday night as Tottenham Hotspur shrugged aside their own injury problems to punish the chronic weaknesses that have suddenly arisen in Alex Ferguson's defence.

Thus Newcastle went into Tuesday evening's home game against Arsenal in a position to re-establish the seven-point lead with which they left Old Trafford after last Wednesday's 2-0 defeat.

On New Year's Day four years ago Queens Park Rangers won 4-1 at Old Trafford to set off a chain of events which saw Manchester United pipped for the title by Leeds. Whether the similar victory by Spurs will have a similar effect remains to be seen. But it would be difficult to deny after Monday that United have hit a crisis.

The events at White Hart Lane wiped out the burgeoning confidence which had offset United's pre-Christmas defeats at Liverpool and Leeds. Having lost Irwin from their back four, in addition to Bruce and Pallister, United suffered a further setback when Schmeichel strained a calf muscle during the warm-up.

The Danish goalkeeper struggled through the first half, conceding two goals, and then gave way to Pilkington, who was on the bench only because Scholes had had to pull out at the last minute with a stomach upset. Even before Pilkington's arrival, however, the United defence had displayed worrying glass-jaw tendencies.

William Prunier, a prospective signing from Bordeaux, looked as lost against Tottenham as he had appeared capable against QPR two days earlier. Of the Frenchman's qualities as a skilful, constructive centre-back there can be little doubt but against Sheringham and Armstrong he floundered.

Keane: crucial to United's title hopes but thwarted at Tottenham

Tottenham, however, went into the match with manifold troubles of their own. Mabbutt had joined a casualty list which included Fox, Howells and Dozzell, which meant Nethercott joining Calderwood in central defence. Caskey and Campbell faced an ebullient Keane in midfield, and Rosenthal and Dumitrescu gave Spurs width.

Despite some inspired moments from Giggs, Cantona and Cole the back four retained its shape, and Campbell's success in denying Keane the sort of evening he had enjoyed against Newcastle was crucial to the result.

Ultimately United were overwhelmed by the growing strength of the partnership between Sheringham and Armstrong which has now brought Tottenham a total of 27 goals since Klinsmann's departure. Once Sheringham, with a header, and Armstrong, with a fiercely struck shot, had hit post and angle in the opening 10 minutes, the tone of the evening was set.

Armstrong set up Tottenham's brief initial lead in the 35th minute, feeding the ball low into the middle where Sheringham, in a lot of space, had time to correct a poor first touch before beating Schmeichel.

United's response was masterful. An exchange of passes between Phil Neville and Butt turned the Spurs defence on the left and Neville's low cross allowed Cole to score his fourth goal in as many matches.

Yet United's problems at the back persisted and led to Spurs going back in front on the stroke of half-time. Parker reached Austin's cross ahead of Sheringham but could only clear the ball to Campbell, who scored confidently.

Within three minutes of the second half Pilkington had been beaten. Yet again a high cross, from Caskey on the left, caused trouble for United. Rosenthal nodded the ball back and Armstrong stooped low to head it in.

As Rosenthal blocked Butt's shot on the line, before Walker stopped Cantona's attempt to score from the rebound and Cole hooked the ball just wide, the contest looked far from over.

But in the 66th minute Armstrong chested a cross on to Sheringham and then headed the ball past Pilkington after his fellow striker had chipped it back into the middle. It was the first time Spurs had beaten United since April 1990.

Rugby Union Heineken European Cup semi-finals

Irish are out of luck

Karl Johnston and David Plummer

UNTIL last Saturday one could have said that this was a season in which Leinster's cup runneth over. They had won 10 matches on the trot and had taken the Smithwick's Inter-Provincial Championship for the first time since 1983.

Like Smithwick's, Heineken is brewed in Ireland. But this particular cup was dashed from Leinster's hands 14-23 in the semi-final here by a Welsh club whose only previous visit was in 1947.

Leinster conceded only one score — a smart drop goal by the scrum-half Andy Moore 12 minutes from the end — in the second half and themselves deserved more than 14 points. But the fly-half Alan McGowan fluffed two relatively easy kicks just after half-time, having also missed a difficult conversion, and with 10 minutes or so to go Leinster's decision to take tapped penalties instead of going for goal kicks was simply pointless.

Despite an early drop goal from the Cardiff fly-half Adrian Davies, Leinster gave as good as they got in the first half. Cardiff's slick running and quick thinking led to tries by the No 8 Hemi Taylor and the centre Mike Hall, both converted by Davies, but two penalty goals from McGowan left Leinster in with a shout at 6-17 after 15 minutes, and excellent running by their left-wing Conor O'Shea, McGowan and the scrum-half Alain Rolland culminated in a try for Chris Pim.

McGowan's failure with a difficult conversion was excusable and just before half-time he and Davies exchanged penalty goals: 14-20 plus wind advantage in the second period left Leinster still serious contenders. But the failure of their jumpers to cope with Derwyn Jones in the line-outs proved disastrous.

In the other semi-final, Toulouse, beaten only once at home in the past eight years, were rarely troubled by a Swansea side with only one away win to their credit this season.

The visitors mounted a brave rearguard action but were generally outclassed and would have lost by an even wider margin than 30-3 but for some casual back play by the cup favourites.

The French champions meet their Welsh counterparts Cardiff in the final on Sunday, but this semi-final did not foster a mood of anticipation; even in the freezing weather there was more perspiration than inspiration.

Football results

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP
Arsenal 1, Wimbledon 3; Blackburn 2, Tottenham 1; Bolton 1, Coventry 2; Chelsea 2, Liverpool 2; Coventry 1, Southampton 1; Everton 2, Leeds 0; Leeds 0, Blackburn 0; Liverpool 4, Nottm Forest 2; Man C 2, West Ham 1; Man Utd 2, QPR 1; Middlesbrough 0, A Villa 2; Nottm Forest 1, Middlesbrough 0; Sheff Wed 4, Bolton 2; Tottenham 4, Man Utd 1; Wimbledon 2, Everton 3. **Leading positions:** 1, Newcastle (played 20, points 45); 2, Man Utd (22-41); 3, Liverpool (21-38).

ENDSLEIGH LEAGUE: First Division: Derby 2, Norwich 1; Grimsby 1, Huddersfield 1; Huddersfield 1, Stoke 1; Ipswich 5, Port Vale 1; Millwall 1, Leicester 1; Norwich 3, Reading 3; Portsmouth 2, C Palace 3; Reading 1, Tranmere 0; Southend 0, Barnsley 0; Wolves 2, Portsmouth 2. **Leading positions:** 1, Derby (25-46); 2, Charlton (24-39); 3, Leicester (24-38).

Second Division: Brighton 1, Stockport 1; Carlisle 1; Blackpool 2, Shrewsbury 1, Carlisle 1. **Leading positions:** 1, Crewe (22-44); 2, Swindon (22-44); 3, Blackpool (22-39).

Third Division: Bury 0, Hartlepool 3; Exeter 1, Chester 2; L Orient 0, Gillingham 1; Plymouth 2, Exeter 2; Preston 5, Cardiff 0; Torquay 2, Colchester 3. **Leading positions:** 1, Gillingham (22-43); 2, Chester (22-42); 3, Preston (22-41).

BELL'S SCOTTISH LEAGUE: Premier Division: Hibernian 2, Hearts 1; Rangers 7, Hibernian 0. **Leading positions:** 1, Rangers (20-49); 2, Celtic (18-41); 3, Hibernian (20-28).

First Division: Dundee Utd 2, Airdrie 2. **Leading positions:** 1, Dunfermline (18-37); 2, Dundee Utd (20-36); 3, Greenock M (18-33).

Second Division: All games postponed. **Leading positions:** 1, East Fife (17-39); 2, Stirling (18-36); 3, Berwick (17-28).

Third Division: Queen's Pk 1, Ross County 1; Queens Park 5, Albion 1. **Leading positions:** 1, Livingston (17-34); 2, Brechin (18-32); 3, Ross County (18-29).